

MUNCH

HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT PR
AGENCY AND GET THE BEST
OUT OF THEM:
A GUIDE FOR STARTUPS

(INCLUDING A JARGON-BUSTING DICTIONARY SO YOU
CAN UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY'RE ACTUALLY SAYING)



HELLO!

OK, so you've come up with a brilliant new idea or business. Congratulations! But now what?

How do you get the world to hear about it? How do you get the media to write about you? How do you reach customers or potential investors? You've heard about this thing called 'PR' but what is it exactly? What's the difference between PR and marketing? How does it all work?

SO MANY QUESTIONS!

We know that PR can seem like a bit of a dark art, with lots of jargonny acronyms and a million agencies out there to choose from, so we've pulled together this simple guide to equip you with almost everything you'll need to know to make the best decision for you.

(At the end you'll find our jargon-busting dictionary of all the key terminology too).

SO WHAT EXACTLY IS PR?

Public relations (PR) is the art of storytelling with a purpose.

It's about taking your message, your brand, your product or your business, and creating news or content that journalists want to write about, ensuring the right people hear about you at the right time. People do PR for lots of different reasons to drive sales, to change perception, to build a reputation and more.

If you're thinking 'isn't that just the same as traditional marketing?' then think of it this way. Traditional marketing - i.e. bought advertising space, owned social media etc - is like you telling people that you're good in bed. Imagine the impact when someone else tells them. It's your message, delivered through a trusted source or influencer, with added kudos.

WHAT TYPES OF AGENCIES ARE THERE?

Agencies come in all shapes and sizes.

Some specialise in one particular industry, while others work across multiple sectors. Some are big, some are boutique. Some concentrate on consumer brands, some focus on B2B. So what are the main types of agencies and how do you decide which kind of agency is right for you?



CORPORATE

Corporate PR enable companies to communicate with their various stakeholders - both internal and external.

It may involve communicating financial results to shareholders, producing annual reports or developing a strategic communications plan for an organisation.



SPECIALIST

Specialist PR agencies often work within one particular sector, whether it's fashion, health, financial services or tech.

They often place stories in niche industry titles in addition to sections of the mainstream media.



CONSUMER

Consumer-facing brands and businesses that want to reach the general public will often choose a consumer agency to work with.

Consumer agencies are experts at coming up with ideas that reach the media where a brand's audience will see them, often in national newspapers, magazines, TV and radio or online media.



B2B

Business to business (B2B) agencies specialise in working with companies whose primary customer base consists of other companies.

B2B covers a wide range of sectors including manufacturing, professional services, finance, consultancy and information technology.



HOW TO CHOOSE?

There are thousands and thousands of agencies in the UK.

Even once you've narrowed your choice down to one particular type of agency, the choice can still be overwhelming. How do you go about finding the right agency for you?

SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

- ☒ Do you know someone who has recently worked with an agency? Did they have a good experience or a bad one? Would they recommend them?
- ☒ Is there a brand that you admire? Get in touch and try to find out which agencies they've worked with in the past.
- ☒ Websites such as Gorkana and PR Week often feature news about brands hiring new agencies, and are also good ways to keep up with the latest thinking within the industry.
- ☒ Are any agency owners writing or speaking publicly about the business challenges you face? Perhaps their agency can help you.
- ☒ Look online - although be warned, typing 'pr agency uk' into Google brings up around 113 million results, so you should add a few keywords to help narrow it down.
- ☒ Searching for PR case studies will often bring up some successful work which might resonate with you.

HOW DOES AN AGENCY WORK?

Once you've identified an agency you want to work with, you need to think about how you want to work with them.



PROJECT

A short-term, focussed piece of PR activity, often working towards a specific date or goal.

Perhaps you are planning a crowdfunding campaign and want PR support to ensure you reach your goal, or maybe you are launching a new product, service or piece of content and want an injection of publicity. PR stunts would fall within this bucket.

GREAT FOR

An injection of publicity at a key time in your business calendar or a way to hijack upcoming cultural or topical events.

TO CONSIDER

Once the project is over, if you end here, any momentum built up could drop off.



CAMPAIGN

Like a project, a campaign has a definitive start and end date, however, will consist of multiple activities over a period of time driving towards one (or multiple) objectives.

The time frame is longer than a quick project but shorter than a retainer, and the purpose and scope of the campaign is set at the beginning.

GREAT FOR

A bigger challenge or job, where you want to have a longer lasting impact, as your target audience or customer can follow, or be part of, your journey from start to finish.

TO CONSIDER

A campaign is carefully planned in advance. Should you want your agency to be reactive and jump on stories whilst working with you, let them know in advance so they can allocate time for this.



RETAINER

Retained agencies will work with a client over a minimum period of six months to a year to keep your brand and business featured in the right places, and support business needs as they arise.

With a longer-term relationship, the agency is able to fully embed itself in your team and understand your brand, competitors and business challenges.

GREAT FOR

Being on the lookout for opportunities to hijack the news agenda and place your brand into talked about events.

TO CONSIDER

Retained agencies will act as an extension of your team and so it's important to choose people you gel with, as you'll be working closely.

THE AGENCY MODEL

Of course, every agency is different, but often when you hire a PR agency, you are hiring their time, their creativity and their expertise.

Once they have a clear idea of what you want from them based on your brief (more on these soon), they will often calculate how much time the work will take to deliver to their high standard.

Retainer contracts will be calculated in the same way, depending on how much support is required each month to achieve the objectives you both set.

WHAT IS A BRIEF?

The brief is possibly the most important document in the whole process of working with a PR agency.

It lays out exactly what you want, when you want it and how much budget you want to allocate to the task in hand.

Imagine asking someone to build you a house, but not telling them how many bedrooms you want. Or where you want them to build it. Or when you want to move in.

Or whether you want a mansion or a cottage. Admittedly, it would be an entertaining episode of Grand Designs, but you're unlikely to get your dream home.

PR is no different. The more detailed your plans and the clearer your brief, the more you can expect to get out of your PR agency. You know your business best at the end of the day, so give them a summary of your business challenges or goals and let them advise on the PR to help you achieve these.

WHAT IS A BRIEF?

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER...

KNOW YOUR BRAND

This may sound obvious, but it's important that you know exactly what your brand is all about, what its values are and what the tone of voice is.

DECIDE YOUR OBJECTIVES

As we've mentioned, businesses (and people) do PR for many different reasons, so knowing exactly what you want to achieve is key. Be as specific as possible.

UNDERSTAND YOUR AUDIENCE

Who are you trying to reach? Are you aiming to attract investors, new business leads or a new customer demographic. Knowing who you are trying to reach shapes the PR approach and defines the ideas and the media outlets your agency will target.

GIVE A CLEAR TIME FRAME

If it's for a launch, when are you going to launch? Is there enough time to prepare everything in advance? The best PR is carefully planned with ample time to develop the ideas, perfect the messaging, create the materials and outreach far and wide. It's worth giving as much time as you possibly can.

ALLOCATE A BUDGET

The sky's the limit with most marketing and PR is no exception. The more budget there is, the more creative a team can be and the more activities and 'tactics' they can plan to achieve the goals you set. It's really helpful to give a PR agency your budget or at least a ballpark so that they can advise you best and come up with a plan that you can actually sign off on.



"Pssst, we run fantastic brand ID workshops to help give startups an outside perspective on how to position against competitors and own a unique territory"

We've created a template to help you brief your PR agency and ensure you give them everything they need to get the best out of them. Please email theteam@munchpr.com and someone will send it right over.

THE AGENCY'S RESPONSE

To get the very best work, it's a good idea to give agencies a couple of weeks from receiving your brief to sending a response, so do plug this into your timings.

Once they received it, the agency will produce a response which will demonstrate their understanding of the challenges your brand faces and set out a strategy and some ideas on how they think that they can help you achieve your objectives.

Should you decide to work with them, once onboard you can work up the ideas into more detail and get going!

If you want to work through the detail before signing up, that's fine too, but it's not unusual for agencies to require a development fee for this.

SETTING KPIS

During the planning or onboarding process it's a good idea to agree some KPIs or measurement benchmarks, so that you can measure how effective or successful your work together is.

There's no right or wrong way to do this - some people like to set number of pieces of coverage. Other people (like us) prefer to align to what your business objectives are.

However you do it, it has to feel right for both of you and it's good to check in on these regularly to make sure what you're doing is working or if you need to adjust your approach slightly.

THE CONTRACT



It's time to start!

Most PR agencies will have standard contracts that they use for all their clients and this will set out all of the crucial information including:

CONTRACT TERM

When you're due to start working together and when you're due to stop.

PAYMENT TERMS

The date each month when the retainer fee is due, or the date of payments for a one-off project.

SCOPE OF WORK

Exactly what is covered within the project, campaign or retainer plans and what is due to be delivered. Anything out of this scope wouldn't be able to be provided by the agency within the same budget.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE AGENCY

Once you've signed the contract, that doesn't mean you can now just sit back and relax. This is actually where the real work (and fun) begins!

Your PR agency will be acting on behalf of you, so they need to know the facts about your business inside and out. You should think of them as part of the team. Often this is referred to as 'onboarding' - where an agency absorbs as much as they can about you.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR AGENCY

TO HELP THEM HELP YOU, IT'S GOOD TO:

WORK TOGETHER

A good agency will be asking lots of questions. It helps to spark ideas and gives them the ammunition to go out there, represent you and find the opportunities that might not have come your way otherwise. Your enthusiasm and how forthcoming you are with information and assets will help your agency get results.

BE OPEN

Most brands have one or two things that they would rather not be out in the public domain. Rather than hiding these facts

from your agency in the hope that they will be overlooked, brief them fully on the issue. They can assist you in preparing for the worst, or help you find a way to potentially turn a negative into a positive.

BE PREPARED TO BE AVAILABLE

The news doesn't wait for anyone and you can't expect your PR to be able to put a pause on a breaking news story or shift a journalist's deadline. Sometimes the best results are secured on the back of an instant reaction to what's happening in the news. Be prepared to react quickly to any relevant events and ensure that your spokespeople are fully briefed ahead of any interviews.

REPORTING

When you first start working with an agency, it's important to discuss what sort of reporting structure you would like.

You may have internal deadlines that mean you need a PR update every week, or fortnight. You may require a coverage report ahead of your monthly meetings. Whatever the internal structure of your business, communicating this clearly to your agency means that they will be able to ensure that you have the information you need, when you need it.

Do remember though, reporting takes time. So if you'd rather your agency focusses on the media outreach, opt for a reporting-light approach.

SUMMARY

Finding the right PR agency can seem like a big task, but hopefully this guide will help make process a little easier.

SUMMARY

KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- ✓ Think carefully about what you want to achieve from your PR.
- ✓ Be realistic about your goals, timings and budget.
- ✓ Understand who it is you want to reach.
- ✓ Do your research. Before contacting an agency, try to find out about the sort of work that they do.
- ✓ Think about how you want to work. One-off project or monthly retainer?
- ✓ Write a clear and complete brief. This is, without doubt, the most important stage of the whole process.
- ✓ Work together with your agency. See them as an extended part of the team. You are all working towards the same goals!

So that's it! Well almost.

We're an agency that loves to ever-improve so please do get in touch to let us know what you thought of this guide, if there's anything you think we should add to make it even more helpful or to add some terminology to our dictionary on the next page.

Or just drop us a line to say hello on theteam@munchpr.com. We're a friendly bunch.

Until then, good luck, have fun and go do some fantastic PR!

THE JARGON-BUSTER

A jargon-busting dictionary so you can understand what your agency is actually saying.

With every industry, there's new jargon and terminology to learn. Here's a handy glossary of some key terms to help you decode some PR speak.

BYLINE

The name next to an article that someone has written. Writing 'a byline' is essentially the same as an op-ed

DPS

Double page spread in a magazine or newspaper

EMBARGO

A date before which a story cannot be written about by media

FIRST LOOK

A story offered exclusively to one journalist ahead of a wider release

NEWS GEN

Short for 'news generation' - usually a data/stat-based story that creates news

NEWS-JACKING

Piggy-backing on a story when it breaks to benefit from the public interest in the topic

NIB

Short for 'news in brief' - a very short side article

OP-ED

Opinion piece, this will have 'a byline'

ON THE WIRE

A press release issued to all the media via a news agency service

PAGE LEAD

The main story on the page in a newspaper

PHOTO OP

A photo opportunity

PHOTO STORY

Creating a media moment with the use of a strong, or series of strong, images

PROACTIVE PR

When a PR approaches journalists to invite them to cover a story

REACH

The potential audience for a piece of coverage

REACTIVE PR

When a journalist approaches a PR/brand or when a brand needs to react to the news or industry happenings

SELL IN

When PRs contact a bespoke media list of journalists with a story

STUNT

A one off activity with the sole purpose of generating coverage

SURVEY STORY

A form of 'news gen' - commissioning research to create an interesting story

WARM LEAD

A journalist who is interested in a story but has not yet confirmed coverage

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