



How to do More PR with Less Budget

The news doesn't stop in difficult economic times. Fast-changing business conditions often result in non-stop media inquiries that must be answered even as ongoing proactive communications work continues. For many PR professionals, a downturn means trying to get a lot more done with a lot less budget. However, just as strong companies work to capture more market share during a recession, good PR people work to capture more mind-share from the media during a recession.

New techniques and technology, along with a strong dose of back-to-basics common sense, can help you increase your productivity to get through the slowdown. At the same time, your relentless focus on bottom-line results during the downturn may serve to demonstrate how PR, among all marketing disciplines, can deliver the most bang for limited budget dollars. Here are ten tips on how to do more with less in a challenging economy:

1. Align PR tactics with business strategies

Understand your organization's strategic business objectives. Consult the same market research used by the advertising team. Focus on those PR initiatives that will directly support the business and marketing strategies your company has adopted.

2. Focus on revenue-building opportunities

Know what makes the phone ring. Develop lead-generating PR tactics and campaigns that directly support the sales team and help them keep existing customers happy, identify and qualify prospects, and close new sales.

3. Use technology to save time for productive work

There are plenty of automated tools enabling you to do a better job, so get up to speed. The revolution in search technologies will continue. Integrated software services from Cision and other applications for editorial research, contact management, monitoring and analysis can save time while dramatically improving results. Substitute unnecessary travel with teleconferences, videoconferences, and instant messaging with media and clients. Leverage all the low-cost social networking tools at your disposal, from blogs to Facebook to Twitter.

4. Know who you need to reach

A few minutes spent on good editorial research before making a call can be the difference between a day wasted and a day well spent. Access a complete, up-to-date media database to understand which editors are worth contacting and which will have no interest in your call. Why make ten unnecessary calls based on guesswork when one informed call will deliver the result you need?

PR Recession Survival Tip Sheet 1



5. Know what story you plan to tell

Think like the editors you are contacting and make sure the story you are telling is as good as or better than the ones they are already working on. When making a pitch, follow the old adage, “Keep it simple.” A good headline and sound bite will either get a positive response or not – without wasting your time or the editor’s.

6. Look for high-percentage opportunities

Pick your shots carefully. Some stories are easier to tell than others. Go for the ones you are most confident will deliver near-term results. Maintain and continue cultivating your long-term relationships with editors, but invest less time pitching stories that won’t see light of day until long after the immediate crisis is over.

7. Recruit, train and promote PR evangelists from within

Every organization has a tremendous pool of intellectual capital. Review your guidelines on who can speak to the media and when. Cultivate PR evangelists who will help you save time by doing some of your work for you. Most ambitious executives know that a little media exposure can go a long way toward their own job security during an economic downturn. Find them, train them, and take advantage of their energy.

8. Cut expensive events and promotions

Costly and time-consuming PR events are great “want-to-have” but not “must-have” investments in a recession. Work your network of media contacts aggressively on an editor-to-editor basis, especially when your organization has important news to deliver. Personal contact can result in almost as much exposure as a far more expensive press conference or press tour. It’s also increasingly possible to create much more cost-effective virtual events utilizing webinars, podcasts and video

instead of more expensive and time-consuming live publicity events and campaigns.

9. Confront the bad news head on

An immediate response to bad news is a lot less time-consuming than days spent dodging or deflecting questions. Be open about the market and economic challenges. The media will cut you a lot of slack in a downturn, especially if you are forthright about the problems you face and forthcoming about the solutions you have planned. In the quarterly Cision Index of Corporate Reputation survey, it’s often the organizations that have confronted patches of bad news most directly that will see improvements in their corporate reputations.

10. Be ruthless about your PR priorities

Before undertaking any task, carefully consider whether it is essential to your success or whether it may prove to be a diversion. Time wasted is money lost, which is a quick road to disaster in a downturn, whereas time well spent may be the key to an early recovery.

Keeping these ten tips in mind will help you weather the downturn and possibly even turn crisis into opportunity. Focusing on delivering excellent PR results more cost effectively than any other marketing discipline at a time when every minute and every nickel counts can be the key to increasing your share of mind - and budget - when good economic times return.

Coming Soon:

PR Recession Survival Tip Sheet 2:

Showing Your Boss How PR Pays for Itself when Budgets are Tight

-and-

PR Recession Survival Tip Sheet 3:

Using Social Media to Get More Done with Less Money

