

# Ask The Expert



In this issue we are chatting with our expert Catherine Dhanjal from **TheAnswer Ltd, Professional & Passionate about PR.**

## Wendy Murphy Asks:

How do I decide where and on what to focus my PR budget (and how to decide what's "safe" to allocate to PR as part of my business). I know PR is one of the last things that a business wants to spend money on and often the first thing to go when things are tough. I'm at the "where to start" stage, apart from a bit of rather laywoman social media self-promotion and reliance on word of mouth and repeat orders.

## Louise Craigen Asks:

I've just started up a business offering Social Media advice to Small Businesses and at the moment I have no budget for PR. Do you have any tips for free PR at all? I'm using Social Media to help and of course, that's free but I was wondering if you could add anything to that?

## Catherine Says:

Firstly thanks for the questions. I think that knowing when to bring PR into your marketing mix, what constitutes PR in the digital world and how much time or resources to allocate to PR are questions which businesses often ask themselves.

I would say one of the main drivers for PR should be what it can do for you in terms of grabbing people's attention, then their Interest, building a Desire to purchase and helping to move them to Action. As we know from research, people often can't pinpoint where they first heard of a product, or what was the trigger which made them interested in buying it, and it's often only the last interaction that they're even consciously aware of.

For this reason keeping up the momentum is a key part of marketing and PR, and it should be seen as a long-term part of your strategy, rather than a stop-start approach. For most people PR is synonymous with media relations and coverage in the press, so I'll focus on that

## Some practical steps:

1. Review your key target audiences and identify the top three priority segments
2. Think about hard news coming up over the next year (e.g. product launches, exhibitions)
3. Think about the challenges potential customers are facing and how you could help.
4. Which are the top three messages you want to get across to each sector? Identify them in short, snappy sentences which you can build into all your communications.
5. Research key online and offline media and platforms which will cover your three priority segments – for example, magazines, newspapers, radio, TV, blogging sites, e-news. Some publications will only take news from you if you take out an advert or advertorial – do you feel that the outcome will be worth the additional payment?
6. Draw up a timetable of actions month by month for the next year – there's a sample model on my blog which you can download.
7. Check that your news releases, articles or interview opportunities are tailored to the publication you're targeting for best chance of success.

Remember PR can be a slow burn and it can take a while to establish relationships and credibility with press. If you're paying a PR consultant to work on your PR, you could budget anywhere from £400 a month to £2000, depending on the scope of work and how it fits into your overall marketing strategy.

Catherine is based near Bristol and works with clients nationwide.

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