

**TRANSCRIPT**

**PODCAST #11: INTEGRATING PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MEDIA RELATIONS INTO YOUR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

VOICE-OVER: Here is this week's Raising the Bar podcast for Business To Business Magazine with Business Development Coach, Robin Hensley.

ROBIN: Understanding and mastering the art of Public Relations is key for business success in our world today.

Hello and welcome to another edition of Raising the Bar's coaching series. I'm Robin Hensley, with Raising the Bar, and this week we'll be talking about Public Relations and Media Relations – how to use them strategically in order to get a maximum return on your investment of time and money; and how they can be used in a variety of ways to increase your revenue.

As most of you are fully aware, there is a current trend called “management by sales.” This is where company leadership assesses the value of a top employee -- by the revenue that is generated by that individual. This puts employees under pressure, especially those wishing to be on the partner track. They must bring in their share of the dollars -- servicing clients is just not good enough any more. But how do you expand your business in the most efficient and effective way? Public Relations. Whereas Advertising is meant to “sell” an idea or product, Public Relations is a “soft sell,” creating a positive feeling about a service or product, which in turn yields clients and client loyalty, for you and your firm. Even if there is someone handling the marketing for your company, you will gain more visibility by finding ways in which to put the firm in a positive light.

Public Relations techniques are often under-utilized. In general terms, public relations encompasses media relations, speaking engagements and other communications techniques that spread a company's message to both internal and external audiences. For purposes of this podcast, we will specifically focus on the media relations aspect of public relations.

Consider these examples of how public relations works hand-in-hand with marketing:

- A Fortune 500 company may use media to create buzz about a new product: Did you notice the launch of Apple's iPhone? The buzz that was created generated a rush to obtain an iPhone from AT&T wireless stores.
- Other companies may want to generate good will with their target audiences: Take a look at how The Home Depot sponsors Atlanta sports teams that are owned by The Home

Depot founder Arthur Blank. There is a mutually beneficial partnership for both the sponsor and the company. The teams get money and The Home Depot gets huge visibility.

There are more subtle and less-expensive ways of getting a positive message across. Sometimes public relations that has been written for another purpose can yield media attention. For instance, a law or other professional service firm may produce a newsletter that includes expert advice, a description of the firm's community service activities, or news about clients. These kinds of articles can be "recycled" and pitched as stories to the media.

The situation can also be reversed. When a company earns positive media attention, press clippings can be displayed in company newsletters or on their web site.

Positive coverage from a media source speaks volumes – more than anything released from the company, because the press is usually unbiased, and its coverage can be trusted. By the way, take a look at my web site or promotional materials – great articles about me from the *AJC*, *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, *Fulton County Daily Report*, and *Business to Business* magazine! The articles promote me and explain what I do. The reporting is genuine, and I didn't have to pay for it.

When prospective clients look at a web site, press clippings are often what "sell" them in committing to do business with the firm. Just think about how you do business. Have you ever read an article in the newspaper and saved the article for the next time you're looking for a lawyer of that type, a landscaper, or an interior designer?

According to Atlanta public relations executive Dave Poston, owner of the professional services public relations firm Poston Communications, "Often, the members of your legal or sales team are utilizing a number of the 'traditional' media relations techniques, even if they don't realize it."

"Well," says Robin. "It's time to take notice and develop a strategy for how media relations can work for you. No more hit or miss attempts. They can be a waste of your time."

So, just how can we create a successful combination of public relations and media relations that will help increase your client base? Consider this:

Reach out and "touch" your contacts. Qualified prospects should be "touched" by the company at least seven times per year. If you aren't using some of the following techniques, you are missing out on some great opportunities that don't cost you a thing.

- Sending out a press release works well....
- Having a partner from the firm or you write a bylined article or appear on a podcast works even better.
- A partner or you could write a column that is perceived as giving professional advice or knowledge for free.
- A partner could attend an editorial board meeting, being interviewed by key personnel at the local newspaper. This could gain more recognition for the firm and help to create a positive relationship with those in the media.
- If you or your firm is positioned as an “expert in the field”, there are opportunities to be quoted in an industry newsletter, or even be called by newspapers or radio and TV stations for quotes on breaking stories. Can you imagine the positive impact it would have on your firm if a partner were quoted in The New York Times as an expert? This excellent third-party endorsement is invaluable. It’s priceless.
- Is there a story that can be pitched to the media about trends in the industry? If so, your firm could again be quoted for its expertise on the topic.
- Is the firm involved in community work? Perhaps a partner or you could be quoted in the newsletter or web site of the non-profit organization. Firm sponsorship of community activities has added value – being recognized for doing something good.

Taking full advantage of all of these exciting public relations opportunities requires strategy. You might want to hire a marketing coach (HINT HINT) to make sure you’re getting the best mileage you can from each “touch” with your client.

Keep in mind, for every “touch,” more touches can be generated.

- For instance, partner bios can be enhanced by citing the partner’s quotes found in leading publications.
- Your firm’s newsletter can reference expert quotes that were given in the media.

- Reprinting these articles and mailing them to individuals on a target list is the simplest form of direct mail. If the article is sent to a cold or warm lead, a telephone call from you could make that lead hot, hot, hot.

Just as a reminder, you and your firm should track all contacts with the media and the client, perhaps using a computer database so that it's easy to see what next steps should be taken in contacting each client or potential client.

Media relations can be used to help close the deal in both subtle and overt ways. Here are more sophisticated ideas that can catapult you into success.

Do you have an industry niche?

Does your company have a new product or service bubbling up to the surface? Sending press releases or writing articles for media outlets or professional organizations in that niche industry can help to accelerate your firm's professional standing in that field.

Build a media list and get on the phone to those journalists about the most recent activity surrounding that product or service.

To take advantage of media coverage you get, send those clippings to potential clients in that niche market. Can you see how this process goes round and round, eventually spiraling you up to the top?

Who are your existing clients?

I know we've been talking about marketing to new clients, but how about building on the ones you already have. Frequently, giving clients "something of value for nothing" can help build client loyalty and longevity. Here are some ideas to show your clients that you are looking out for them:

- Ask top clients to join with the firm's executives in public relations interviews in order to provide another "expert" point of view.
- Invite a key client to co-write an article with an executive in the firm, with both receiving co-byline credit.
- Sponsor roundtables on hot topics. Invite well-known publications to attend, and ask key clients to serve as roundtable participants.



- Put media on panels or seminars sponsored by the firm. Media participants may entice key clients to attend.
- Or, nominate key clients for industry awards.

My head is spinning from all of these great ideas about how to get, and take advantage of, positive media relations. If you develop a solid plan, you will be rewarded, and amazed at the results,

Until next time, I'm Robin Hensley, with Raising the Bar.

VOICE-OVER: You have been listening to a Raising The Bar program on Integrating Public Relations and Media Relations into your Business Development Strategies, with Business Development Coach Robin Hensley. For a full transcript of this program, stop by the Business to Business Magazine website at [btobmagazine.com](http://btobmagazine.com) or go to [raisingthebar.com](http://raisingthebar.com)

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