

When it Comes to PR, Pay for Performance, Not Time

By: Jacqueline Bodnar

As companies become savvier in how they allocate their promotional budgets, they are rejecting the traditional public relations service model that has fed the bottom lines of PR firms for decades. The days of large retainers, endless meetings, billable hours and illusive results are quickly giving way to a more effective approach to getting the word out: pay-for-performance.

It's About Accountability

Pay-for-performance introduces accountability to the process, an element that has been sorely lacking in the field up until now. Traditionally, companies wanting to promote a new product or service in the media hired a PR firm. In exchange for a substantial retainer — often running into the hundreds of thousands of dollars — and billable hours on top of that, the PR firm committed resources and time to championing the product or service among the media. Problem was, that is where the commitment ended. From the PR firm's perspective, if a press release resulted in a few newspaper articles around the country, great. If not, no big deal; the fees were going to be collected anyway.

Pay-for-performance turns the traditional PR service model on its head, mitigating much of the financial risk that had been assumed entirely by the client.

At the vanguard of the pay-for-performance movement is Washington, D.C.-based Publicity Guaranteed, a firm that has re-defined how clients are charged for PR services.

"For too many years, clients have paid six-figure price tags for PR services without any guarantee of results," says Alex Konanykhin, Publicity Guaranteed's founder. "This lack of accountability would never be accepted in any other part of a company's operations, so why is it acceptable in PR?"

Publicity Guaranteed charges its clients only for articles that actually make it into print. The simple fee structure, which is described right on the company's home page (www.publicityguaranteed.com), ranges from \$195 to \$2,850 per placement, depending on the circulation of the publication. Clients can even place caps on their fees to hedge against the chance that an article will be placed in more newspapers than anticipated.

ROI — From Spin to Precision

Demonstrating return on PR investment has always been a challenge, if not a downright fiction. The pay-for-performance model greatly simplifies the ROI calculation while increasing the confidence in the numbers. After all, quantifying the ROI and justifying the value of a \$50,000 PR investment that yields only 10 newspaper articles is an exercise in

spin that would test the skills of even the most seasoned PR practitioners. If, however, the cost of placing those same five articles could be determined precisely — as would be the case in the pay-for-performance model — the math gets much less fuzzy and the case for added value gets much stronger.

Is Pay-for-Performance PR Pie in the Sky? Hardly.

The pay-for-performance trend has already transformed the online advertising world from the Wild West of pop-up ads, e-mail SPAM and search engines to a finely tuned device that generates revenue by connecting sellers to motivated buyers. Google and Yahoo's Overture, for example, have built profitable mega-businesses by charging advertisers by the click. A Google search can yield hundreds of millions of matches, but click on one of Google's spotlighted sponsored sites — a good indication of buying interest and motivation level — and the sponsor pays a fee.

Publicity Guaranteed is already seeing a similar transformation the PR industry, and clients are thrilled with the results. "We hear so many horror stories from our clients about PR dollars going down a black hole," says Konanykhin. "Publicity Guaranteed is demonstrating that PR can be affordable, and the people in this business can be accountable for results."

RedZee raises the bar for "kid-safe" Internet searches

(Syndicated News) Major search engines have opened up an enormous variety of resources for kids and teens of all ages to find almost anything they search for. Unfortunately it has also created a new avenue for kids and teens to access pornography through these major engines. According to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, every year one out of every five children is sexually solicited online. One of the more common incidents on the Internet involves children searching for explicit topics that send kids to pornographic Web sites.

Major search engines allow unfiltered results and that can be a problem, especially if kids are doing the searching. This is raising concern across the nation for schools, parents and even the government. Major search engines could install filters that would stop users from typing explicit topics. Unfortunately, pornography is one of

the most searched for items and this would impact their user base and their bottom line.

The Bush administration is trying to pass an Internet child protection law to stop pornographic Web sites from showing up on computers that children are using. In the process, they recently requested records from Google to see what people search for. Although Google refused to release the information, the goal was to see how often a search resulted in a pornographic link. That protection law was struck down just two years ago leaving parents, schools and teens to find ways to get good clean search results. ISE Corporation created RedZee Search (www.RedZee.com), a possible solution to this problem. RedZee, a new search engine, filters out pornographic results while delivering accurate relevant searches. "We are filling the desperate need for a quality search engine

that offers clean, yet still accurate results," says John Stewart of ISE Corporation. RedZee offers fast search results that are targeted correctly to what people are looking for. Searches for explicit or pornographic related words do not have a result. With the peace of mind this company is offering they have quickly become popular with parents, teens and schools across the country. "We take pride in knowing that people count on us to help in the struggle to clean up Internet searching as we know it," says Stewart.

The government may never be completely successful at passing any laws to keep pornographic search results away from children. In the meantime, RedZee's quality record sets them apart and continues to push their company to success. That's why their mission is "to be the most accurate and the most reliable for adults, and at the same time, think of the children."

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