

MARKETING VS PR

HOW TO PROMOTE YOUR PRODUCTS
AND SERVICES THE RIGHT WAY

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



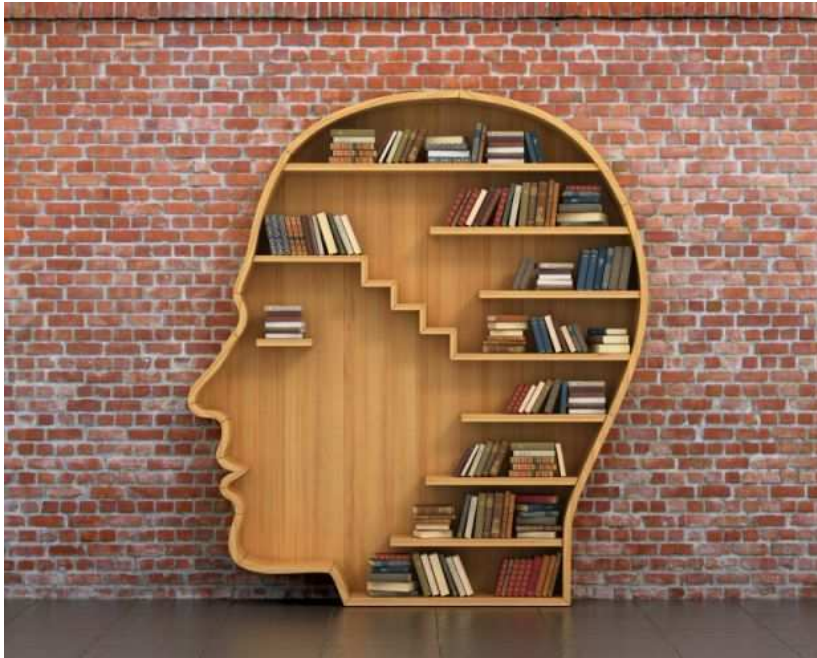
Janine is a former newspaper journalist who has more than 10 years experience in marketing for both B2B and B2C clients across a range of different sectors and industries.

She has helped numerous entrepreneurs grow their business from scratch and regularly consults with directors, marketing managers and senior executives on how to grow their business exponentially.

In addition to working in the marketing department at Markateur, Janine helps to manage our events programme and provides strategic advice to clients.

Her specific areas of interest include SME marketing, corporate PR and promotion, construction and finance.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS BOOK



In this book you'll discover:

- Why your business needs to get ahead of the game in marketing
- The secrets to powerful and effective marketing tools
- The difference between PR and marketing
- The pros and cons of the best marketing strategies on the planet
- The proven ways of developing a formidable marketing strategy to generate an income for your business

How essential is marketing and PR for businesses?



In the current economic climate, many businesses feel that they have enough on their plate in terms of the day-to-day running of their business, let alone having to think about a marketing strategy.

But the reality of the situation is, if you don't promote your business - no one else is going to do it for you.

Recent developments in the digital arena have served to level the marketing playing field for SMEs (small to medium-sized enterprises), but compared to their larger counterparts - companies in this category are still at something of a disadvantage when it comes to promoting themselves.

The problem most SMEs face

SMEs typically lack a high-profile physical presence and don't tend to have an extensive budget available to spend on paid methods like advertising. Online marketing is a highly attractive option in terms of cost-effectiveness, however, to a large extent, you get out what you put in - and what it lacks in price it more than makes up for in the amount of time and effort you'll need to put in to succeed.

In this guide, we'll look at some of the best marketing and PR options available to SMEs, discuss the pros and cons of each and offer some top tips to help you get the most out of your chosen strategies.

The difference between marketing and PR



While marketing and PR have traditionally merited separate definitions the lines have blurred between the two over the past few years - mainly thanks to the growth of digital.

There's a number of areas where the two disciplines overlap and the objectives of the pair are highly similar - utilising a broad strategy of communication to promote the brand in question and bolster business.

In separate box section:

“Public relations is a strategic management function that adds value to an organisation by helping it to manage its reputation.”

- The Chartered Institute
of Public Relations

“Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably.”

- The Chartered Institute
of Marketing

Overall, we can broadly define PR as using a suite of techniques to bolster positive sentiment in a holistic way, whereas marketing aims to connect directly with key audiences and is heavily weighted towards boosting the brand's bottom line.

As the former is relatively hard to quantify, it's easy to see why PR is often overlooked in favour of more 'measurable' activities.

How Online Has Transformed The Perception of PR

The move toward online marketing has, to an extent, brought PR back into the limelight, however.

Two areas that straddle the lines between these two disciplines are social media and search engine Marketing.

Social Media:

Both marketing and PR campaigns have used new social platforms to great effect. It's also relatively easy to quantify the success of your efforts. Innumerable analytics tools are available to show how well you're connecting with key audiences and the sort of effect your efforts are having on site traffic and (if appropriate) sales.

Search:

Without delving too far into the technical aspects of search engine optimisation and marketing - Google and co. are placing an increasing emphasis on the quality of content and inbound links (i.e. where a third-party website has a hyperlink that points to your website). PR companies are already adept at producing interesting, non-promotional editorial content on behalf of brands and accruing inbound links ties in fantastically with social activity - with shares posted on social networks counting towards these in the eyes of search engines.

Real-world activity also works well when capitalised upon via social and search efforts - attracting media coverage and giving companies something interesting and inclusive to talk about on social channels.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT OPTION



While picking the right sort of promotional activities to engage in will largely depend on the specifics of your company, there's a number of attractive options available to small businesses.

If you largely operate online or remotely, it may make sense to focus heavily on the search side of things, while if you rely on nurturing leads and word of mouth - you might want to consider social or media relations.

There's no such thing as a silver bullet in marketing - with each and every option coming with its own set of pros and cons. To help you decide on the best picks for your business, we've put together a primer on some of the most popular marketing and PR activities and how to go about procuring them.

PUBLIC RELATIONS - PROS, CONS AND HOW TO PROCURE



Advantages of PR

As we mentioned in the introduction, PR activity can take many and varied forms and can be a great option for small businesses looking to generate exposure.

- Many SMEs are rooted in their geographical location and gaining coverage, holding events and engaging in other activities on a local basis can help companies connect with key audiences nearby.
- Efforts in this vein can not only build brand recognition and trust, but also offer a great complement to off and online advertising, search and social activities.
- However, one of PR's biggest benefits is its ability to level the playing field between an SME and its larger rivals. Effectively using the right range of PR activities can help create awareness of your products or services within a target audience.
- As well as helping you attract new customers, PR can deepen the relationship between your company and your clients, develop brand affinity and give you a local, regional and national voice within your sector.
- The broadcast and print media are always looking for new experts and voices, and an effective PR campaign can help deliver your message, your difference and your expertise to a potentially huge audience.

PR Cons

- What form your PR takes (from press releases and sourcing coverage opportunities, to events, sponsorship and anything in between) largely depends upon the specifics of your business and how you want to connect with key audiences (e.g. on a local or national basis, online or in-person).
- It can also be hard to quantify 'pure' PR activities like media relations. When generating coverage and exposure, PR companies have traditionally relied upon metrics like equivalent advertising value (how much the same level of exposure in terms of advertising would have cost).
- Whether you opt to try your hand at it yourself or rely on an agency, PR will require a certain level of input at your end. For instance, when demonstrating your expertise in editorial coverage, you'll need to contribute key messages at a minimum and create interesting, unbiased articles if you opt to do it entirely by yourself.

PR - How to procure

There are countless agencies offering PR services across the country. The main decision to make when choosing one is whether you want 'pure' PR or seek to engage in PR as part of a wider spectrum of services.

Increasingly, PR agencies have social and search wings and vice versa for many 'traditional' advertising, search and social agencies. As mentioned, these types of activities tie together really well and even if a particular agency doesn't offer a certain service as a matter of course, it's likely they'll have contacts or partners that they can outsource this to.

Picking an agency is no easy feat and we'd recommend speaking to a few to get an idea of how they'll cater for your particular goals, budget and way of working. One vital consideration is how they'll interact with you, as the success or failure of a PR campaign can hinge on having clear and open lines of communication between the two parties.

On the other hand, you can opt to engage in your own PR. While far from easy, drafting a press release isn't rocket science - although cultivating a relationship with relevant publications and journalists to ensure it gets seen can take hard work and perseverance, along with an understanding of what makes a news story.

Ideally, you would want to work with an agency that understands the importance of quality content and is able to provide a service that integrates PR with search, social and other marketing activities.

EVENTS - PROS, CONS AND HOW TO PROCURE



Events can be a great option for SMEs looking to raise their profile and generate exposure for their business in a certain field or geographical region.

- Depending on the type of event you're looking to hold - these can also provide a platform for small businesses to showcase their expertise in a given area.
- Interacting with your target audiences in the real world can be an invaluable source of qualitative research - enabling you to get to grips with the needs and pain points of your prospects. Events can also offer great networking opportunities and if cultivated correctly, can lead to new business.

Events - Cons

Events come with a relatively high price tag when compared to many other marketing activities. Costs will quickly rack up in terms of venue hire, refreshments, presentations and promoting the event.

- The time, effort and resources you'll need to invest into putting together a successful event shouldn't be underestimated either.

Staff will be taken away from their fee-earning work to tackle the logistics of the event and productivity will undoubtedly suffer.

- There's simply no way to guarantee the success of an event either. Companies that are inexperienced in arranging such activities might fall foul of common pitfalls and a lack of attendees or engagement can turn an event into something of a white elephant.
- For all the work that goes into an event, the results can also be hard to quantify. The metrics that matter will depend on the specifics of your industry and event - however, some common factors to pay attention to are leads, editorial coverage and positive feedback generated off the back of it.

Events - How to procure

When organising events, small businesses are faced with two options - tackling the task themselves or going down the agency route.

The former option is likely to be the most cost effective, but this saving is likely to be offset in the amount of time and effort that will need to be spent ensuring it goes off without a hitch.

Organising the logistics of an event can quickly turn into a time sink - and your day-to-day business may suffer during the interim.

If you opt to go with an agency, be prepared to pay an event management fee that will largely be determined by the amount of time it will take to organise. However, their experience in putting together and managing events will be highly beneficial in ensuring yours is a success.

SOCIAL MEDIA - PROS, CONS AND HOW TO PROCURE



It's pretty clear social media isn't just a fad and marketers across innumerable sectors have embraced this platform with great enthusiasm and to great effect.

Pros:

- Social media can be a great option for SMEs looking to raise their profile and connect with the people (or companies) they want to do business with directly.
- As mentioned previously, social media marketing can work well alongside other promotional activities - giving you something to shout about and highlight to your key audiences.
- Since it's typically free to set up a profile on any major platform - social media also stands as a highly attractive option in terms of cost.

Social Media - Cons

While you have to be 'in it to win it' with social, simply having a presence is no guarantee of success. Brands and businesses of all shapes and sizes have been met with varying results in terms of their social activity and you'll largely get out what you put in.

- To succeed at social media marketing requires a considerable amount of time, effort and analysis, and success won't happen overnight.

Putting together a strategy for a sustained campaign is simply a must if you're to avoid wasting your time with inconsistent activity.

- If you're not already au-fait with the field, social media marketing can be difficult to get your head around and you're likely to face stiff competition from those in your field who are already making strides on this front.
- The digital nature of social means it's fairly straightforward to quantify the results of your activities. However, discerning what metrics are important can be problematic (e.g. raw follower count versus interactions) and the best analytical tools often require a subscription.

Social Media - How to Procure

For SMEs looking to jump on the social bandwagon, it can be as easy as signing up for the appropriate platforms and setting up a business or brand page. However, we'd urge newcomers to spend some time on formulating a concrete strategy before lifting a finger to avoid wasting time on fruitless activities.

Once you've selected your target platforms and signed up, you'll need to assign responsibilities for the maintenance of your profiles and activities to a staff member or team, who will then have to juggle this with their regular work.

The other option for SMEs is to go down the outsource this service. There's a wealth of companies and individuals offering this service, however, it can often be difficult to tell how good they are. Be sure to pay attention to factors like award wins, client references and demonstrable successes in the past (particularly in sectors relevant to you).

SEARCH OPTIMISATION/MARKETING (SEO/SEM) – PROS, CONS, PROCUREMENT



These practices can often seem like arcane disciplines to those unfamiliar with them, but they're thankfully becoming ever-simpler and are relatively easy to understand, even if you're not tech-savvy. SEO simply describes making your site as visible and relevant to search engines (e.g. Google) as possible for terms (i.e. the words people type into search engines) that you want to be found for.

Pros:

- Small businesses are at a great advantage in this respect due to the growing focus on search engines producing specific results based on the geographic location of searchers.

Similarly, Google has led the way in trying to understand the intent of users, leading to a greater emphasis on natural language and what's known as 'long-tail' search.

- SEO is completely data-driven, making it a highly quantifiable activity and when combined with its relative cost-effectiveness, it's easy to see why it's become so popular.

SEO - Disadvantages

- Like many online marketing activities - with SEO, you'll largely get out what you put in. If you compete in a relatively niche area, SEO could be an easy win - letting you capture more of your target audience. However, if you're in a mainstream field - it's highly likely that some of your competitors will already be making headway in this area.
- In the latter case, you may need to throw a lot more resources at your SEO efforts and even then, success is not guaranteed. Whether your business climbs in the search engine rankings can hinge upon how well the competition is performing, the skills being applied to your SEO campaign and (the now-frequent) changes to search engine algorithms.
- Similarly, changes to the way Google and co. discern the quality of results have led to a crackdown on 'easy' tactics like link building and a greater emphasis on attracting genuine interest via quality content. This is something of a double-edged sword - having levelled the playing field for many small businesses, but bolstering the time, effort and resources required to succeed.

SEO - How to procure

The average SME can't necessarily justify an in-house marketing team - let alone those who are solely devoted to digital. Therefore, existing members/managers might have to juggle their duties while learning the theory and practice of SEO.

As this is a far from practical option in many cases, it makes sense to outsource your SEO.

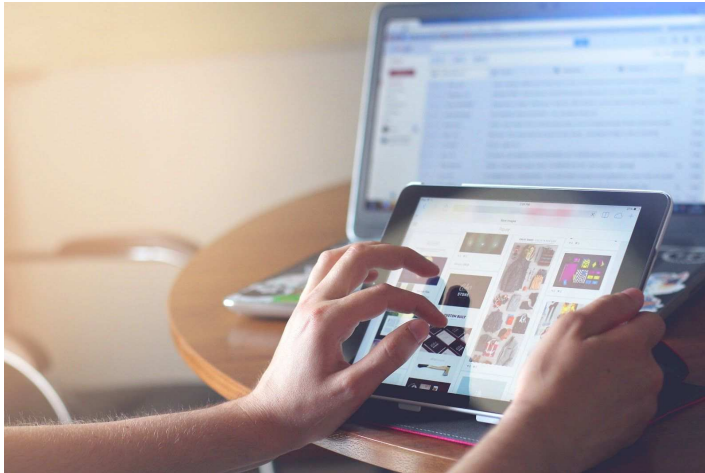
Agencies in the field are innumerable and sadly, there are some out there looking to take advantage of those who aren't au fait with what it is exactly that they're buying.

Beware spammy emails promising to get you to the number one spot on Google, as well as too-good-to-be-true offers of links, likes and social media shares.

There's no foolproof way to select the perfect SEO agency, but some key issues to pay attention to include:

- A focus on your goals
- Get quotes and consultations from multiple companies
- Demand to see case studies and references
- Check if the firm has worked with clients in your sector before
- An in-person meeting is a must
- If they integrate SEO with wider PR and marketing activities.

ONLINE ADVERTISING - PROS, CONS AND HOW TO PROCURE



Online advertising is an umbrella term that can describe disparate activities like banner adverts, promoted social media posts and

PPC (pay per click) advertising.

Pros:

It's a brilliant avenue for companies looking to sidestep the time intensiveness associated with SEO and social success, enabling you to get your message seen by the people that matter for a price.

Online advertising works instantly - letting you promote posts and pages and generate qualified leads from the web. And figures show it's an increasingly popular option in the UK.

Depending on how it's used, online advertising can have tremendous benefits, including (but not limited to);

- Being highly quantifiable
- Offering easily discerned ROI
- Options like PPC can be easily monitored throughout the campaign
- Certain types can support SEO efforts
- It enables easy targeting of pre-qualified audiences.

Online Advertising - Cons

While it's a relatively easier option for enhancing visibility than focusing on organic search or social media marketing - there's still the problem of conversion.

- Online advertising can take out some of the legwork associated with getting people to your site or social page, but once they arrive there - it's up to you to convince them to take their journey further (e.g. buy, download, read more).
- Seasoned pros will use conversion-optimised landing pages, work tirelessly on testing calls to action and conduct A/B and multivariate testing with the aim of enhancing performance.
- While it's easy to sign up and pay for ads - tinkering with the conversion elements in your spare time can take a toll. You'll also need certain amount of web development expertise to ascertain how well you're doing and optimise accordingly.
- Those looking to invest in online advertising also have to take into account click-through rates.

There's a wealth of statistics that show, while steadily improving, the likes of PPC and display advertising suffer from something of a lack of engagement - particularly when compared to 'organic' avenues like pure SEO and social.

- If you're competing for a relatively popular term or subject matter, you can also expect to encounter stiff competition. For instance, in 2012 Hallam

Internet found advertisers were paying upwards of £75 per click on the term 'online live roulette'.

Targeting is evolving all the time, but smaller companies can potentially see their limited budget quickly wiped out without necessarily making a single sale.

Online Advertising - How to procure

As always, you can opt to engage in procuring online advertising yourself. However, we'd highly recommend a generous helping of research before getting your wallet out. If you go down this route, it's fairly easy to sign up for whatever option you decide on.

Some of the most popular include:

- Google Adwords
- Google's Display Network
- Promoted tweets
- Facebook Advertising

However, we think the favourable option in this scenario is to outsource to a reputable agency. As with hiring an SEO firm, you'll want to extensively check their credentials and past work to be sure you're getting the right team for the job.

Despite meriting a greater initial payout on top of your actual ad spend - going down this route will allow you to reap the benefits of an online advertising campaign without having to do any of the heavy lifting yourself.

Local Advertising - Pros

An excellent choice for small businesses, advertising in the regional or local press can help companies that partly or solely rely on their geographic location connect with key audiences and seem like part of the community.

- Achieving editorial coverage can often be a struggle for smaller business and local advertising can be a relatively easy way to generate awareness and brand recognition.
- It also gives you more control over your message than PR-type activities - which can be of great use to companies with a very specific point to get across.

Local advertising - disadvantages

Local papers are the bread and butter of advertising for small businesses and for better or worse, these have seen a rapid decline over the past decade.

Readership levels are falling across the board - giving SMEs less opportunities to target the people that matter.

- The success of any given advert is also far from guaranteed. As with property, location is the watchword for advertising space - and the cost of positioning reflects this.
- Similarly, adverts can prosper or fail on the strength of their creative elements. Quality design comes with a relatively high price tag attached, which can stand as another barrier to SMEs with limited marketing budgets.

Local advertising - How to procure

For many small businesses, the easiest and most cost-effective way to secure advertising space is to simply do it themselves. Local papers often include basic creative work in their advertising packages - although you shouldn't expect the world of these.

While the agency route can be more expensive, the experience and existing relationships cultivated by these companies can be a boon to small businesses. Agencies can be particularly beneficial for stand-alone campaigns or securing seasonal advertising space.

When tackling an extensive advertising campaign, it's pretty much a necessity for small businesses to go through a media buying house.

These will cost out the entirety of your campaign across several publications and you can typically get a discount for buying in bulk.

NEXT STEPS - WHAT HAPPENS NOW?



Hopefully this guide will prove useful for you when deciding how best to promote your business, but if there's one overarching tip we could offer it would be to keep a laser-focus on your goals.

Marketing and PR activity shouldn't be driven out of a sense of guilt, as a box ticking activity or because your competitors are doing it. It's only by giving some serious thought to what you want to achieve that you'll be able to avoid wasting time and effort on tenuous activities.

At some point, SMEs will recognise that they need to review their marketing strategy. At the outset, decide whether you want to handle this in-house or appoint an external agency. If you choose the latter, do your research online, draw up a shortlist of professional who are experts in your industry sector and ask them to provide recommendations without obligation.

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