



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

You know in your gut that PR delivers more bang for the buck than any other marketing discipline. And you know that when budgets are tight, the team that can show a positive return on investment (ROI) wins. So why are PR budgets often among the first to get the axe in a down economy? Because PR professionals often forget to promote their most important client: themselves. If you are competing for scarce resources, here are eight ways to show your boss how public relations can pay for itself during an economic downturn.

1. Make a plan, and sell it

If you don't articulate your objectives in ways that clearly communicate the value you deliver to the organization, no one else will do it for you. Decide what you need to do and clearly communicate why it will "move the dial." Then sell your plan to management, schedule regular progress reports, and insist on constant feedback.

2. Focus on revenue-building opportunities

Keeping score is always important in the best of times and a matter of survival in the worst. And in an age of continuous, real-time feedback via web metrics, setting measureable objectives is a must. Make your goals concrete and easy to quantify so you can use

data to measure your progress on a year-to-year, quarter-to-quarter, month-to-month or even week-to-week basis

3. Monitor your results

Knowing where your message has appeared is the first step toward understanding what kind of impact it will have. Many new, web-based tools for collecting and monitoring online, print, broadcast and social media are making it possible – and cost-effective – to gather the performance information you need. Remember, no result is too small to track in a viral marketing environment where the chain of communication is only as strong as its weakest link.

4. Measure quantity and quality

Remember the old saying, "you can't manage what you don't measure?" Measuring the impact of your message is the next step in winning the battle for resources. First think *quantity*: start by measuring news releases and other initiatives undertaken against the number of mentions in target outlets to determine your reach. Then think *quality*: weight and score positive, neutral and negative coverage – many Fortune 500 companies use Cision's time-tested Net Effect and Impact Score ratings to objectively rate the qualitative impact of their PR coverage.

PR Recession Survival Tip Sheet 2



5. Merchandise your results

Learn to be a shameless self-promoter. Report on your results and share the data with peers and management on a regular basis from day one. Frequent reporting will show your progress and boost the profile of PR, drive better responsiveness from marketing team members and spokespeople, identify gaps in measurement methodologies, and provide background for changes in strategy, marketing mix and tactics.

6. Learn to talk the talk

“Numbers” is the language of the boardroom, so learn to speak it like a native. If like many PR people you are either an ex-journalist “word person” or a left-brain “creative,” you might find Boardroom-ese as difficult as fifth-year French. In that case, take “Financial Management for Non-Financial Managers” (aka “Accounting for Dummies”) at your local university, and start talking the talk. Combining your PR-based mastery of verbal persuasion with your new fluency in the language of numbers will give you a potent advantage in competing for your share of the marketing budget.

7. Own up to your mistakes – and learn from them

As you promote yourself, also be quick to accept responsibility when things go wrong. Be frank, identify shortcomings, and work to correct them. Learn from your mistakes, fix them, and make sure they don’t happen again. Never hide a mistake. Rather, promote the solution as a case history in how to succeed in a challenging environment.

8. Start now

Don’t wait until “everything is in place” to start monitoring, measuring and merchandising your results. If you don’t have hard data yet, use anecdotal success stories to show your progress. If need be, start with a simple home-grown system of measurement, get management and your peers comfortable with it, and evolve over time to more sophisticated measures. No matter how simple or sophisticated your program, the time to start is now. Every day you lose is a day someone else gains in the race to secure the resources you need.

In economic downturns, everyone always wants their “unfair share” of a shrinking pie. When PR comes up short, it’s not merely a “turf battle lost” – it can mean severe damage to brands, corporate reputation and a company’s business health. Following these eight tips will help you conclusively demonstrate the value of PR in a down economy and secure the resources you need to succeed in bad times and good.

Coming Soon:

PR Recession Survival Tip Sheet 3:

Using Social Media to Get More Done with Less Money

