



**CUSTOMER
MANUFACTURING
GROUP**

WHAT'S THE REAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ADVERTISING & PUBLIC RELATIONS?

A LOOK AT TWO DEMAND CREATION ELEMENTS

Customer Manufacturing Group is an international firm of experienced professionals who help you convert your marketing and sales activities into a System to Manufacture Customers™.

While the differences between direct mail, customer surveys, collateral material, and trade show presence are obvious, sometimes management makes the mistake of viewing advertising and public relations as the same thing — a misconception that can easily undo the success of your carefully planned Demand Creation and Value Delivery programs. Care and skillful use of both elements can result in more effective and efficient Customer Production in your System to Manufacture Customers™.

Those reading the above are likely to be in one of two camps: 1. "Well, there's a no-brainer!" and 2. "What? There's a difference?" In our many marketing and sales incarnations we've encountered believers in both camps, and experienced their very separate realities.

Like the difference between sales and marketing, the line sometimes can be pretty wiggly.

When comparing Advertising and Press/Public Relations, we like to use the analogy of the proverbial two-sided coin — two different sides of the same thing. And, when the two tactics are employed successfully by the marketing department, they should work in concert to promote your company's image and products or services. The objectives of these two tactics are the same, though implementation and results can differ greatly. Usually their success is determined by how well you and your people know *Who* your customer is and *What* they are buying — sound familiar?

In thinking through the differences, the two most obvious are cost and control.

You Pays Your Money And You Gets Your Ad

A paid advertisement incorporates the corporate and/or product message into the text of an advertising spot, be it print, radio, TV, billboard, etc. Everyone who reads, sees or hears your ad knows it's been paid for by your company — often at a very dear price.

True, there are bad advertisements, but with a good agency and a lot of money, even a less-than-perfect product can be made to look pretty good.

When designing the ad, you or your agency choose the most appropriate visuals and text to represent the company or product in a favorable light, or to gain notice. In the U.S., advertisers can say almost anything about their products or services, even skewer the competition, so long as their claim can be proven.

Every now and then various government agencies and consumer advocates like *Consumer Digest* check out the validity of these claims, which can result in "bad press" for you if they're found to be untrue, thereby totally defeating your favorable image objective.

Granted, there are those who say "any exposure is good exposure" — and that's true if you're in the same business as Larry Flynt. In general, however, we don't agree.

The same double-edged blade goes for mentioning the competition in your ad. If you're not that well known, this tactic can be compared to placing an ad for your better known competitor, because even if the publication reader actually reads your ad (which is far less likely than you might assume) they will be inclined to remember the name they've heard before. On the other hand, if your competition is as obscure as you, why would you want to help promote their image in your very expensive ad?

Again, while there are exceptions to every rule, a good agency or marketer should be able to anticipate your potential prospect's negative or positive reaction to these advertising tactics and advise where and how much advertising you should do.

Remember, advertising guarantees visibility, but not necessarily sales. Just because you say your product is great isn't always enough to

sway your target prospect to check it out. This is where effective Press Relations holds the advantage.

Paying For Press Relations — Hit Or Miss, But Worth The Price

No matter how much you pay a publicist, agency, or in-house PR professional, you cannot be guaranteed press coverage — regardless of what any of the above might promise. More importantly, you cannot be guaranteed positive coverage. But, what makes press coverage a more valuable tactic (sometimes) than advertising is that when it works, it works much better than advertising.

Instead of you blowing your own horn, some respected industry guru is touting the benefits of your company and its fabulous products/services.

Your positive message has now been validated by a supposed unbiased third party. Yes, you can give a freelance writer or editor the names of your happiest customers to ensure some positive endorsements, but . . . today's happy customer can easily become a turn-coat, albeit unintentionally.

You must choose your designated press contacts carefully. Try asking them what they don't like about your product or company before a member of the press does. Any interviewer who considers his/herself a true journalist will try to provide a "balanced" view and might over-zealously do so.

It's important to remember that once you put the message out you can't control how it will be received by the press. Frankly, if your product happens to be a dog, your money is better spent on advertising, telemarketing, and direct mail.

Even if you're paying the interviewer or writer to place the story, which is unfortunately perfectly fine with many "trade rags," remember that an editor is likely to make the final cuts and additions. A good editor will demand both sides of the story.

But don't let these sad facts discourage you. A good review or showing in a "round-

up article" that highlights your product in comparison with others has greater validity and impact than any advertisement. It's very unusual for a full-blown article not to mention your competitors, which in this case is a positive if your product or service is portrayed as a strong challenger to the existing standard. Again, we assume your Manufacturing and Marketing people have done the homework to ensure it's superior and have made the point clearly in your advertising and press materials.

In the best possible scenario, let's say you have an excellent product for a market that has a burning need and it's hands-down better than any other. Better yet, let's say there's nothing to compare it to. Ideally, you would do a "press tour" to the key publications and arrange a press event

at an important trade show or convention that the trade press are expected to attend. Of course none of this is free, but depending on where you advertise it will probably cost less than one full-page placement or television spot.

Fortunately, your PR consultant or Marketing person has done a great job

of scheduling meetings with many editors who seem to be genuinely interested as they munch down on the snacks during the presentation. Maybe an editor from the most important news publication in your industry oohs and ahhs over the product or service — even agrees it's unique and asks for more information while promising to "do something on it real soon."

Now, most magazines have a three-month "lead time," i.e., the amount of time it takes from writing the issue to its actual publication and distribution. Obviously, newspapers or weeklies have far less lead time.

Your particular enthusiastic editor works for a weekly, so you anxiously scour the next week's edition and the one after that, but to no avail. Your PR person has voice-mailed, e-mailed, and even faxed various new (and hopefully useful) tidbits of information to the editor in hopes of jogging the article loose, but a month goes by and still there's nothing.

Management wants to know whose fault this is! What went wrong? Actually, nothing went wrong. This editor had a backlog of articles that were "promised" and it turns out the big merger of two industry giants during the same week has taken up all of her and her staff's time. No slight intended, but your big news wasn't quite as big industry-wise. Eventually your announcement shows up in the "What's New" section without any editorial comment.

This is not a PR failure. The skilled marketer or PR professional knows that it's a first step in developing a "relationship" with the editor.

Having referred to the publication's editorial calendar, he contacts the editor in plenty of time to be included in the upcoming product roundup scheduled for the second issue in May. He also reminds the editor that she thought your product was beyond any of the existing competition and suggests a "side-bar" (text set apart from the rest of the article by a colored background or frame) to highlight the differences. A good editor would know that's exactly the right way to fit your product into the piece.

Including reprints of this article in your press kit, giving them out at trade shows or using quotes from the article in your advertising provides a positive endorsement no other single marketing tactic can offer. It takes more time and effort to do PR effectively than to design and place an ad, but when it's done right, the combined impact of both tactics will definitely show up as increased profits in your bottom line.

More Information

Detailed information on our services and a number of Special Reports and cassette tapes are available. If you'd like to learn more about Customer Manufacturing Group, or for a complimentary subscription to *Customer Manufacturing Updates*, give us a call at (800) 947-0140, fax us at (408) 727-3949, visit our website at www.customermanufacturing.com, or e-mail us at info@customerfmfg.com.

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