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Establish Your Credibility For Better Public Relations

By Ana Ventura

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I had a college professor one semester that was so captivating in his lectures that I was hesitant to leave when the class was over. I probably would have been content to sit there and listen to him spout off about anything as long as he kept talking. He was interesting, yes, but even if he had stated that cats could talk and buildings could walk, I probably would have believed him solely based on how much I trusted and respected his knowledge.

There are many aspects of public speaking that should be taken into account when incorporating speeches and presentations into a public relations campaign. One of the first ones that should be considered, though, is the issue of credibility.

What is credibility? Well, it incorporates a lot of things, but the main point to remember is that when you are credible, people are more inclined to trust you and believe that you are a reliable source of information.

So how do you go about building your credibility? Well, let's take a closer look at what defines credibility.

Competence: If you stand up in front of an audience and decide to talk about Darwinian logic without any sort of conception of who Darwin even was, your audience probably isn't going to believe that you have the authority to be speaking on such a subject. However, if you list your information sources in your presentation along with a quote or visual aid, your audience will know that you did your research, and that you know your stuff.

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Other ways to show your competence is to let the audience know about your educational or professional background. You don't have to sound like you're putting on airs here, because the simple truth is that the more work you've done in a specific area, the more you will know about the topic.

Confidence: Looking like you are nervous and uncomfortable doesn't say much for your knowledge. It doesn't matter if you spent twenty five years living with gorillas, people aren't going to have nearly as much respect for your points about primate communication if you don't look like you have any self-assurance. Delivery packs just as much of a punch as a thorough intellect,

as long as you remember that you need both to give a great presentation.

Character: Character is a little trickier, because it's based more on a values system than on how much you know about something. If you've researched your audience's demographics beforehand, you will have more of an idea what sort of issues they will or will not respond to. Even if you are presenting something that is the antithesis of everything they stand for, you can still find ways to word your arguments so that you will appear credible and non threatening.

Rapport: Ah, rapport. Common experiences and interests are what help us as humans relate to each other. If your audience knows you share similar feelings with them, they will be more likely to respond to your message in a positive way.

As a society, the majority of individuals tend to hold a pretty similar system of values that you can use to help you build your own credibility. Social and community values seek to attain such ideals as peace, freedom, respect, family security, and living a comfortable life. Personal values for the individual show that most people wish to be ambitious, forgiving, responsible, and honest. By demonstrating that you stand for similar ideals as your audience, you help maintain a component of trust.

Once your audience has a built a foundation of trust and respect, your message will seep in a lot more easily than if you have little or no credibility. Keep in mind that you can't cruise through a presentation on credibility alone, but it will certainly help your case by leaps and bounds

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The Body of Public Relations

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When broken down, public relations is really nothing more than a set of parts placed together to function as a whole, not unlike a living body. Each of these components performs a specified function, so that when combined with the other parts, the operation smoothly performs the task at hand.

Let's start off at the top. The head of your operation is the strategy you choose to use. This falls under the two options: targeted and non-targeted public relations. If you choose to target an audience, this means that you will be appealing to a specific group of people. Non-targeted public relations, on the other hand, mean that you choose to appeal to the masses.

Targeting your audience is usually the better way to go, because you already know that the people that will come into contact with your efforts have an interest in whatever it is you are marketing. This approach focuses on quality, not quantity, which can usually bring in more results than the mass non-targeted pr campaigns.

The arms of your pr consist of how you choose to get your information to people. Press releases, public speaking, self promotion articles, and media kits are a few of the ways that many Public relations specialists go about getting their company's name out there.

Of course, public relations need something solid to stand on, which is where integrating pr comes in. By reprinting or reusing articles and blurbs in your marketing that arose within your PR campaign, you are ensuring maximum exposure. You can also turn feature length articles into manuscripts and books about your topic. This will establish your credibility as an expert in your field.

Finally, the heart of your public relations might be the most

important bit of the PR body. Give your audience and offer. It doesn't matter how much free information you hand out, many people will not respond until they see an offer. Key components of your offer are clean, persuasive language, as well as keeping neutrality in the offer. This will give your customers a reason to come back to you.

Integrating all of the components of a great PR campaign is a surefire way to get your company's name acknowledged in your field.



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