

THE DELIVERY



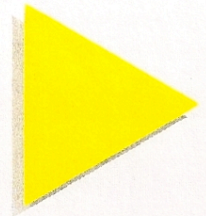
Marketing pros in today's fast-paced, high-tech arena focus on methodically communicating with their customers to fend off competitive predators and gain greater market share. However, in this same industry, public relations practitioners largely continue to apply conventional methods, channeling energy into product-announcement news releases that deliver only "random ink" in the press.

And therein lies the rub: Conventional public relations fails to provide the heavyweight communications necessary to support marketing requirements.

Strategic marketing demands the right tools to build product and company credibility and create a perceived competitive edge in the marketplace.

**Bring in the
heavyweight
communications
and forget
those incredibly
boring, run-of-
the-mill press
releases**

M O R E



By Dan Garza
President, DGPR, Inc.
Campbell, CA

YES!

Marketing-oriented

Be proactive.

Create your own story opportunities.

Maintain message embedded in stories.

Continue to build image based on earlier presented information.

NO!

Product-oriented

Be reactive.

Wait until publication editor is ready to include you in story.

Let editor control company information.

Lose control of marketing message.

Do not be perceived as industry leader.

To support a company's marketing objectives, public relations should focus on industry trends and issues, rather than on mundane product specs. This is important from an editorial perspective, because most editors look for this kind of information—rather than another round of daily 'specsman-ship'—in a news release.

scattered inquiries. While this is acceptable in some instances, such brief stories fail to generate the aura of leadership most electronics companies seek.

Following a traditional press program usually leads to poor communication with your market. Using such an approach, you run the risk of being seen as a non-market player and thus of losing market share. This in turn will generate only scant interest from the investment community

These unappealing results can be avoided through a well-planned and executed press relations program that works hand-in-hand with marketing. Such a program includes carefully plotting press stories, combining industry issues with technical strengths and competitors' weaknesses.

This plan should be carefully executed through the trade and business press, ensuring self-developed stories have value for the editorial community.

Your press relations program, therefore, must consider editorial needs. For example, in the electronics trade press, editors look for current industry issues, technical trends and controversy. Products play a role only if they are major and innovative.

To make this program successful, you must maintain positive working relationships with key editorial leaders. Editors tend to respond to professionals on whom they can rely to provide useful information. Their time is valuable, so it is critical not to

PR STRATEGIES

One critical tool is marketing-oriented public relations, as opposed to conventional product-oriented PR.

To support a company's marketing objectives, public relations should focus on industry trends and issues, rather than on mundane product specs. This is important from an editorial perspective, because most editors look for this kind of information—rather than another round of daily "specsman-ship"—in a news release.

Aggressive marketing-oriented press communications features a well-planned, progressive series of company-initiated information projects that support marketing plans, build a leadership image and create a substantial competitive advantage over time.

By being assertive with the media, a company can improve its perception among

its various publics.

This reactive approach focuses on new-product or product-enhancement press releases. The public relations department presents information to editors, then sits back and waits for editors to call with questions, while at the same time queuing up product announcements in a planned product-launch timeline.

With this strategy, the message is handed to the editors to interpret and present as they choose. Vital opportunities are lost by waiting for editors to decide when they wish to include your information in a story.

Moreover, a time gap between product announcements results in reduced press coverage and a subsequent loss of market awareness.

Often, new-product stories are relegated to the back of the publication and produce

waste it with the same old product feature song-and-dance routine. Certainly, as some trade-press editors have suggested, it is not advisable to read product announcements word for word to an editor's voice mail.

Because editors are bombarded with product releases daily, proper preparation and packaging of announcements will increase the chances they will be read and accepted. For example, you can associate a new product with a hotly debated industry standard. Or link a new-product announcement with a system requirement that has plagued design management for a long time.

Effective press-relations strategies include keying off the editorial calendar; planning and executing contributed bylined articles ahead of time; investigating topics with engineering experts; and wrapping up with key technological issues.

An additional strategy is tracking competitors and zeroing in on their product, technology or design flaws. For example, if competitors license technology to make quick money without the necessary investment in equipment and trained staff, point out the advantages of working with a company that does its own development.

In these instances, marketing and public relations can reveal that competitors lack the technical expertise to properly support their customer base.

Public relations should keep the audience's interests in mind. For instance, design engineers seek specific details most effectively provided through technical articles. In this case, their interests include design trade-offs, in-depth analyses, escalating costs, time to market, and design problems and solutions.

Unfortunately, marketing can even create its own conflicts by being duped into believing a big splash—an advertorial, for example—will generate greater awareness.

In most professional circles, marketing such as this will generate *faux* awareness. While the advertisement will capture attention, it will lack the substantive information engineers seek. Thus, it will prove to be ineffective communication. ▲