



# Considerations in Hiring an Outside Marketing Communications / Public Relations Firm

**By: Scott K. Russell  
Partner**

**July 2010**



## **Considerations in Hiring an Outside Marketing Communications / Public Relations Firm**

Companies hire outside marketing communications / public relations counsel for different reasons and to achieve different goals or objectives. Some need specialized expertise or a level of expertise that exceeds what is available in-house; some seek a fresh outlook and value the perspective and experience an outside resource can bring; others bring in the cavalry in response to a crisis or special event; and these days many simply need extra manpower to make up for staffing cuts.

We have a biased opinion, but see all of those drivers as realistic needs that call for the same response. There are compelling practical reasons for such outsourcing as well, chiefly that outside firms can generally do a better job. Unhindered by daily interruptions, endless meetings, shifting senior management focus, frequently stifling politics and the “do more with less” balancing act that itself requires precious energy and effort – an outside firm can focus purely on producing results, providing value and “moving the needle.”

### **Outsourcing Saves Dollars and Makes Sense**

An even more compelling reason for outsourcing is the financial one. To hire a mid-to-senior level communicator with solid experience, the ability to craft an actionable communications plan and then implement it – a company will spend low-to-mid six figures on salary and benefits. Then, the company must add a budget for the cost of the various activities encompassed in the plan, as well as a budget to provide support staff for the position.

For a fraction of that cost, a company can turn to an agency that has much greater depth of senior staff and experience, requisite support staff, access to subscribed professional services that are value-add, and the insights that come from working with a host of different companies facing similar challenges. Not only are the direct costs substantially less, but the cost for related services are significantly less as well.

Moreover, most agencies typically have more efficient, streamlined processes and efficiencies in place and tend to utilize technology in more efficient ways. Clients directly benefit from these agency investments because agency efficiencies translate to time required – and hence agency cost – in addition to the greater results those efficiencies help to drive. Bottom line, in our experience the results generated an agency generally drive greater ROI than when done in-house.



## Eleven Reasons to Hire an Outside Firm

While every client is different, the following compiles similarities in the drivers behind companies' decisions to hire marketing communications firms. They include:

- 1. There when you need them** — A marketing communications / public relations firm can be an extension of a your communication staff. It can provide services to support or achieve agreed-upon goals, provide a critical perspective, keeping you abreast of issues and provide seasoned advice on how best to respond to issues or crises.
- 2. Objective view and depth of expertise**— Communications firms work best as integral and trusted partners. They provide a critical outsider's perspective and strategic counsel across a full spectrum of marketing communications and public relations activities. Plus - an outside firm can give you fresh ideas on your campaign's needs, its strengths, and weaknesses.
- 3. Improved stakeholder engagement and influence**— Because they do it routinely and in a variety of settings, public relations firms improve your ability to engage stakeholders that include: employees, customers, media, online influencers, community leaders, shareholders, and public officials.
- 4. Sharpened sensitivity to the voice of the customer**— The ability to persuade through education and clear explanation makes marketing communications / public relations firms particularly effective at helping research data and garner third party credibility from targeted media.
- 5. Developing messages and serving as conduits**— Developing effective and appropriate messages can be difficult because of the different audiences at which they are directed. The public relations mindset is your natural integrator for developing a comprehensive communications strategy as well as identifying the best messages and conduits to use. Firms continually work to enhance the effectiveness and achieve the desired results of every marketing effort, public relations campaign, and public affairs initiative.
- 6. Strong digital capability**— Public relations firms adapt readily and integrate many different communications activities. Social media platforms and corresponding networks are simply new tools firms expertly combine into the mix in their role of communications counselor, navigator, interpreter, strategist and implementer.
- 7. Fast and focused**— Marketing communications / public relations firms are biased for action, built for speed and readily work 24/7 in today's information age. They are results-oriented and focused whereas internal staffs are too-often bogged down by the combination of meetings, executive "pet projects" and grind of myriad other internal issues.



**8. Good budgetary stewardship—** Hiring a firm can be extremely cost effective relative to the cost of direct employees. Outside firms can provide peak-load capacity and scale as programs ebb and flow. Additionally, firms such as P2R provide value-added services that greatly enhance any communications programs and would be costly for clients to duplicate effectively.

**9. Paralysis by analysis—** Doing nothing during tough times is not an option for any serious business operation. Public relations firms work with the highest level of corporate executive down to the critical tactical work in the trenches. Firms always ensure clients are prepared, visible and maintain a higher focus on delivery of results and ROI than most inside staffs. Additionally, as an outside resource, a firm is better positioned to keep things moving.

**10. Cross pollination—** Typically, public relations firms work across multiple industries, geographies, and cultures, enabling them to cross-pollinate ideas, providing clients with more robust strategic thinking and more effective marketing communications offerings.

**11. Focused expertise—** Whether a client needs support in a specific functional area or support across the board, a solid firm that is grounded in integrated marketing communications will be able to provide focused support that is aligned with the larger company objectives.

Firms such as P2R understand integrated communications and have the experience to conduct interrelated activities and campaigns that produce specific results, meet larger objectives and stay within budgets. Having such support allows harried executives to run their businesses instead of specific marketing communications activities or campaigns. As an outside resource, the marketing communications element is highly efficient and effective driver of cash-flow, stability and long-term success.



### **About the author**

Scott K. Russell is Director, Account Services & Business Development for P2R Associates and brings more than 25 years of communications, marketing and event management experience to P2R providing senior-level management and strategic planning expertise. His extensive background reflects a track record of success in both agency and corporate environments spanning both the original equipment, Tier 1 and aftermarket sides of the automotive industry.

He has earned numerous national and regional business communication awards and holds a Master's degree in Business Administration from the University of Detroit as well as a Bachelor of Arts degree in Advertising from Michigan State University.

### **About P2R Associates**

P2R Associates is an award-winning, strategic public relations and brand communications firm serving a diverse mix of international, national and local companies in a range of industries.

Headquartered in Livonia, Mich., P2R provides clients with strategy-driven tactics, superior service and measurable results.

For more information, visit [www.p2rassociates.com](http://www.p2rassociates.com).



**Copyright © 2010 by P2R Associates**

All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, faxing, e-mailing, posting online, or by any information storage and retrieval system without written permission from the Publisher.

**For more information, contact:**

P2R Associates  
39201 Schoolcraft Suite B15  
Livonia, Michigan 48150  
(248) 348-2464

**Legal Notices**

While attempts have been made to verify information provided in this publication, neither the author nor the Publisher assumes and responsibility for errors, omissions, or contrary interpretation of the subject matter herein.

The reader of this publication assumes responsibility for the use of these materials and information. Adherence to all applicable laws and regulations, both referral and state and local, governing professional licensing, business practices, advertising and other aspects of doing business in the United States or any other jurisdiction, is the sole responsibility of the purchaser or reader. The author and Publisher assume no responsibility or liability whatsoever on the behalf of the purchaser or reader of these materials.

Any perceived slights of specific people or organizations are unintentional.