

# Salon SENSE



YEAR OF THE IMAGE MAKERS

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## What Can Public Relations Do For YOUR Business?

by Katherine M. Rothman

“Stories that come directly from the salon or spa owners tend to lack consumer merit.”

If you build it they will come. While this was once the case, it has truly become necessary to “promote or perish” in today’s economy. So how do you capture the lion’s share of your market in an increasingly competitive climate? The answer is public relations, a means of promoting the esthetic appeal and treatments offered at your salon or spa through media exposure in the form of editorial stories. In addition, public relations differentiates your beauty business from the plethora of competition by linking your spa treatments or hair services with trendy, controversial or seasonal attractions.

Once a spa has decided to use public relations, it can be challenging to find an appropriate firm or publicist. Salon or spa owners can call the Public Relations Society of America for listings of registered public relations firms. However, keep in mind that the public relations firm does not have to be located in the same city as its clients; the majority of key media outlets originate in New York City, easily facilitating personal contacts with top Manhattan editors and producers. When salon and spa owners are interviewing

prospective public relations firms, they should ask for examples of press releases written for other beauty industry clients, media placements, in addition to client references. In addition, be sure that the PR firm has expertise in beauty PR, which is an entirely different niche than fashion, entertainment or corporate public relations.

Members of the media prefer a story pitch to come from a PR professional as opposed to a spa owner because PR people uniquely understand how to gear a newsworthy pitch to an editor. Stories that come directly from the salon or spa owners tend to lack consumer merit. In addition, publicists can help beauty entrepreneurs receive media placements. By framing media coverage inside your spa, using language in your advertising such as “as seen in Elle Magazine,” prospective clients will notice your business. Or by focusing on your cutting edge salon treatments such as Thai massage, stone facials and thalassotherapy, you will attract new business. Most importantly, remain focused on your own success: do not become obsessed with your rivals around the

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corner. Do the best you can with your own clients by ethically promoting your salon or spa.

Although the benefits derived from public relations is a cumulative process, a public relations firm should be able to give a prospective client some idea of what can be expected in terms of pursued media outlets, continuity of exposure, campaign strategies and the number of weekly hours devoted to the client. One television appearance or magazine article cannot judge its merits. If the salon or spa owner is proactive, responding to media queries in a timely manner, public relations can truly help a practice gain an edge in competitive markets, making the difference between remaining a 'best-kept secret' or having treatment rooms filled to capacity.

As with advertising, there are no guarantees that media exposure will translate into additional clients. Do not employ a PR firm if money is tight; you must be able to engage in PR when you feel comfortable with your revenue because publicists are not miracle workers who increase your business' revenue overnight. It can take several months to see a return on your investment. Even if you are confident of your financial situation, do not embark on a PR journey until your spa is functioning like a well-oiled machine. §

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# Tips for Successful Promotion

## Work the Celebrity Angle

One way to yield media interest is to get a celebrity to sing your spa's praises. If you are fortunate enough to have famous clients, ask permission to use their name in conjunction with your spa.

## Charity Events

Contact these groups and offer up a day at your spa. In charity circles, word of mouth travels quickly.

## A Free Ride for Journalists

Be gracious and attentive to beauty editors, and it will pay off. Always advise your staff in advance when media is coming; you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

## Keeping it Timely

Everyone needs a hook. For example, if Valentines Day is approaching, offer couples massage.

## Press Kits

Present them in an attractive and professional manner including a spa menu, press releases, photos and products descriptions.

## Keeping in Touch with Your Clients

Cultivate a mailing or e-mail list of every person who has frequented your spa, keeping them abreast of news or promotions.

## Cultivating Business

Call IBM's or American Express' marketing department and see if they would be interested in receiving half-priced spa treatments from your business.