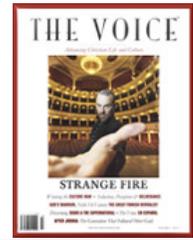




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Small Businesses Can Score Big Teaming up with the Right PR Firm

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BY CHER MURPHY

If there's one thing that every small business can benefit from at one point or another it would be teaming up with a public relations firm. Not only can it take the business to the next level by garnering name recognition and increasing sales, but it can even be helping in managing crisis situations. Choosing which agency to go with comes down to pairing up with one that focuses on small businesses.

"Small businesses have different goals and challenges," explains Cher Murphy, president of Cher Murphy PR, a public relations firm with offices in Miami and Virginia. "They need someone on their side that understands that and can help them reach their goals."

Many things go into deciding on whom to rely. While cost may be the first element some think of, it shouldn't be. Hiring the cheapest firm on the block doesn't automatically equal lousy results, and hiring the most expensive firm doesn't guarantee a home run. Price should be a consideration for budget purposes, but there are many other things the decision should be based upon, such as these key areas:

Personality. It's important to like the representative. A strong relationship goes a long way in producing results.

Expertise. Review the firm's industry knowledge to see if it's a good fit.

Portfolio. Take a look at some of the work they have done. They should be able to give you concrete examples of ways they have helped other companies.

Promises. Listen to what the agency says they will or can deliver. If they offer a lot of promises or guarantees, that should raise an eyebrow. Their only promise should be to try to help you reach your goals, avoiding false promises.

Experience. While the firm should have experience working in PR, it's also important that they have journalistic experience. Having a journalistic writer on their team brings working experience of what the media is looking for, how to write for editors, etc.

Contribute. Once someone has been hired, never hold back. Always be honest and open in communication with your representative. Keeping them informed provides ideas and opportunities.

Passion. One of the things that sets great PR people apart from mediocre ones is a passion for the position. Some people were born to do PR, and they are passionate about helping you reach your goals with it.

"There are many ways that PR can help boost the bottom line of a small business. It all comes down to evaluating and choosing the right agency, and then working with them as a team to meet challenges and make things happen," adds Murphy.

Cher Murphy is the owner of Virginia-based Cher Murphy PR (www.chermurphypr.com), a full-service public relations and communications firm. Cher Murphy PR has helped numerous small businesses gain publicity by providing press release services, copywriting, online media, article placement, and much more.

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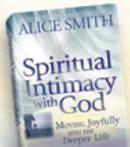
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