

WHAT MAKES A PUBLIC RELATIONS LAUNCH SUCCESSFUL?

I took a moment to sit and talk with a few different Public Relations Executives to discover what makes a public relations launch successful. After asking the question of several execs, I finally received somewhat of a blueprint to a successful launch from Co-Founder of Blackman Rakowitz Public Relations, Diane Blackman.

So, what makes a public relations launch successful?

For Diane Blackman, a Public Relations and Marketing Executive for over twenty years with Blackman Rakowitz Public Relations, “the most fun and the most interesting projects,” she states “are when we either reinvigorate and rebrand a company or product or launch something new, whether it is a \$50 million dollar museum attraction like Madame Tussauds New York, a new business or a global African American web portal from Harvard. Many of our clients stay with us for years, some for over a decade, because we relish big challenges and because we out think, out work and out do the competition.”

So how do they accomplish a successful PR/marketing launch that translates into optimum, often trailblazing results for their clients, beating the odds every time? Here is the blueprint that Diane Blackman provided.

“In the case of Loews Cineplex Entertainment (formerly Sony Theatres), who we were fortunate enough to represent for twelve years until its acquisition by AMC, the company -- North America’s second largest theatrical exhibitor -- had a marketing department that rivaled the best of any Fortune 500 corporation with a tenfold budget. Run by several gifted marketers, first Mark Pascucci and Pam Hennings, and later by John McCauley, Loews was among the world’s most successful movie theatre chains. Its impressive success and enviable position in the global marketplace was due in part to its first class service and state-of-the-art theatres. But in our view the endlessly innovative marketing platforms generated by the marketing folks played an equally key role in attracting moviegoers to the company’s thousands of movie theatres nationwide and globally.

Our job was to take each of the marketing platforms Loews handed to us and develop an equally innovative and compelling public relations campaign that would support the platform, by our attracting the media’s attention on a grand and ongoing scale and by branding the platform so memorably and effectively that everyone would be talking about the program and Loews seats would be filled. And Loews brand enhanced.

One of the dozens of special marketing platforms created by Loews marketing VP John McCauley that we launched and supported was called “Reel Moms,” a series that offered new moms—and dads—a weekly opportunity to see first-run adult movies with their babies in designated movie theaters along with the chance to bond with fellow moms. This was an experimental program never before attempted in theaters anywhere.

To attract new parents and caregivers to movie theaters during the day, we needed to generate tons of buzz and strongly favorable stories in the nation’s influential media outlets to build awareness of the program and help make the program a resounding success.”

Additionally, Diane provided an overview of how their campaign worked:

Campaign Objectives:

“Our first goal was to secure a feature length story on one of the nation’s leading morning shows, as we are well aware that these shows’ audiences are filled with millions of parents. We wrote strong press materials explaining the uniqueness and benefits of the “Reel Moms” program and after approaching our contacts were able to secure an exclusive with NBC’s Today Show. In our first week Today filmed for hours at the Loews theatre in New York that was featuring the series, helped along by visuals such as hundreds of empty baby carriages parked in the main lobby and on the second floor, hundreds of moms, babies and toddlers – along with some dads – interacting and playing with one another prior to the featured film’s start. Today also filmed in the theatre during the movie as moms gleefully watched the screen while their babies cooed in their laps.

The Today Show feature was lengthy and compelling and fun, and very quickly the New York theatre and smaller theatres around the country featuring the program were filled to capacity, supported over months by equally enthusiastic stories on CBS Evening News, NBC Evening News, as well as The New York Times, Newsweek, Associated Press and Reuters. We also targeted and secured stories in local media, saturating the handful of local markets where the “Reel Moms” program was first rolled out.”

Impact:

“Almost empty theaters during the day turned into profit centers. “Reel Moms” was a huge success, attracting sponsors and expanding into top markets nationwide.

In addition to generating revenue and garnering an entirely new audience, the campaign burnished Loews image as a brand innovator and other theatrical exhibitors copied their programs.

In the view of BR Public Relations, truly effective and creative PR campaigns often require experience, a certain boldness and attention to detail that enable your clients to connect with their audiences using both a short-term – the launch – and long-term vision. A smart PR strategist needs to know how to devise a campaign that fully supports their clients’ initiative, needs to know how to create opportunities rather than wait for them, know how to create news the media wants to cover that can help influence or alter perceptions and behavior, know how to build critical brand awareness and market share. There is much to be written about what this entails, but suffice it to say that an important component of the successful execution of a campaign is media relationships – a skilled PR strategist needs to ceaselessly build and improve his/her network of media relationships because often a media friend will go the extra mile for you, as you would for them. It is equally important to know what makes a good story, because the press will respect that ability and take your calls.

Finally the breakthrough results keep rolling in. Clients realize optimum visibility, profitability is achieved, and everyone is happy – particularly us!

Excellence is our daily ambition. Making our clients happy and exceeding their expectations, and bringing the media stories that will capture the public's interest and attention, is what drives us."

It would seem that a great strategy is needed to have a successful PR launch. However, that is not the only component that companies in need of greater visibility are lacking. They are lacking someone who can take the bull by the horns and actually implement the strategies with flawless execution. That is where the seasoned veterans of Blackman Rakowitz Public Relations step in.

We would like to extend our gratitude to Diane Blackman for her time in conducting this interview as well as the invaluable information that she has provided us for this article.