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Nickerson of Nickerson PR answers the question: How do I stay ahead of the curve?

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How do I stay ahead of the curve?

Educating myself. It is extremely important to educate yourself on the recent happenings of your industry. Personally, I attend as many real estate industry events as I can. This allows me to keep in touch with friends, clients and colleagues in real estate as well as complimentary industries. For example, I make a point to know what is going on in biotechnology or finance, as these industries will play a role in the resurgence of real estate.

Although many of the events I attend do not directly pertain to my specialty in marketing or public relations, my attendance is just as critical. By keeping my ear to the ground, I am able to keep up with news that is relevant to my clients and therefore provide better advice. Information might come in the form of a recent brokerage deal or even industry gossip, but it all relates and affects the management of my client's reputation.

Educating others.

While educating oneself is a crucial component to being successful, it is important to educate others as well. When I say "others," I mean reporters, clients, colleagues and friends.

Keeping in mind that reporters are covering more beats and are expected to write feature stories, break news and post to their blog ~ media is reporting news faster and faster, often posting online within minutes. PR professionals are viewed as a critical value-add source of information now more than ever. While technology does have its place in enhancing our efforts, it can not replace the relationship a PR person has with the press or the industry knowledge we bring to the table. These are critical components to managing a company's public perception.

For example, there are times when certain news is better left unsaid for all parties involved. Our clients trust us to keep sensitive news confidential and only release it when and if appropriate. That being said, "no comment" is never allowed. There needs to be a trusted relationship among our team, our clients and the media. There are moments when we need to report or answer to bad news however, when managed correctly, the news can be written in the proper context. I often hear people say that they are afraid of the press because of something negative that has been written about them in the past. I understand this concern, but success with the press is about managing the message and the relationship with the person reporting the news.

As a public relations professional, I have proven myself and my company to be a "go-to" resource for the media. Reporters know that we are quick to respond and happy to help them with all of their needs. For example, when a reporter is looking for clarification or further details on a deal, we provide accurate facts in an efficient, time-sensitive manner. In addition, reporters frequently contact us to put them in touch with the best source for an article they are writing. Whether the source is a client or not, we deliver the most knowledgeable person to speak to the reporter's article topic.

Keeping your clients in "the know" will also enhance your value. This includes making sure they are aware of pertinent news in the industry as well as what their competitors or business partners are doing. In the event that one of my clients cannot attend a particular event, they are well aware that I think and act on their behalf. I always inform my client on the key players in attendance, topics covered and introductions/connections I made for them.

Setting yourself apart.

In today's economy, it is more important than ever to find ways to set yourself apart.

Follow up! Many professionals miss the opportunity to immediately connect with someone on LinkedIn. While it may seem trivial or time consuming, LinkedIn is an invaluable resource for not only connecting with new people but staying connected with those from the past.

LinkedIn can also be utilized for posting valuable status updates (not what you ate for dinner), but rather a relevant news article or inspiring thought. Additionally, answering questions or contributing to discussions in LinkedIn Groups will position you as an expert. Consistently using LinkedIn in this manner will keep you on the minds of others and help you portray yourself as a knowledgeable and trusted resource.

But remember...stay relevant! Filling your "social media brand" with nonsense will train people to ignore your posts (and cause them to wonder what you are doing with your time). Save your personal updates for Facebook and utilize LinkedIn as your connection to the business world...One degree of separation at a time!

Lastly, how does one best use digital marketing and social media? You cannot ignore the impact new marketing tactics can have on your business.

Recently, while speaking at an SMPS (Society for Marketing Professional Services) event on public relations, I chose to skip the typical topic, "How to write a good press release." (Boring!) Instead, Nickerson teamed with the Needham-based digital marketing expert, inSegment, Inc., to educate the audience on what they didn't know they didn't even know!

It is not just about placement anymore; it is about longevity of the placement, your message in the article, blog or update, timeliness, recapture marketing and conversion. Are your communications efforts driving people to your website? Are you winning more business? For example, do you know what publications will create links to your website online? Well, you should! The tactics are changing daily, as is PR as a whole.

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