

Make waves with your marketing and PR

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So why does Waikiki Beach in Hawaii, one of the world's most beautiful and legendary, need PR/marketing? Visiting with my wife in October for a (much deserved) vacation, observing the turquoise Pacific and gently swaying palms, I thought: They really pay people who live in paradise to promote it? Living in Honolulu should be compensation enough.

The Hawaii Tourism Authority/ Visitors & Convention Bureau promotes the 50th state across North America and operate's tourism offices around the world. Lessons learned: (1) You need a vacation; and (2) If paradise needs an ongoing PR program, then of course your business does!

Like you, Hawaii has lots of competition. It's great, but people can choose closer or less expensive destinations. Hawaii marketers must constantly be "out there," promoting what sets them apart: perfect weather, an active volcano, rain forests, macadamia plantations, and breathtaking scenery from movies (From Here to Eternity, Jurassic Park) and TV shows (Hawaii Five-O, Magnum P.I., Dog the Bounty Hunter).

Sometimes you don't have to work hard to get publicity. In November, when President Obama hosted 20 other presidents at the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference, the backdrop was the scenery. Great PR. When a shark attacks, it's not so good. But the tourism PR people make sure visitors know the unlikelihood of a shark attack. With seven million visitors annually, they emphasize there are fewer than eight shark attacks a year. Positive PR!

Now, back to reality and widgets - or whatever you're selling. It's tough to admit: Your product or service might not be as glamorous as Hawaii. We're bombarded daily by hundreds of commercial messages. To get attention for the building you're trying to sell, financial services you're pitching, or a high-tech alarm system, the savvy business person must find ways to rise above the din:

- (1) Think creatively - What makes your brand unique? Do you have something especially newsworthy? Invent story angles (based on facts, of course).
- (2) Re-purpose your content - Exciting content can be 'repurposed' to fit news releases, blogs, websites, social media, etc.
- (3) Aim for quality - Make sure your message, brand and content are top quality to reflect your business or product. Tone down superlatives and hyperbole.
- (4) Do the unexpected - An element of surprise makes you stand out and more memorable - Make waves even if it's not Waikiki!

The moral: Whatever you're selling - Waikiki or widgets -- find the 'unique selling propositions' that set you apart, and use them at every opportunity. And if you don't have the time or creative spark, I know a great PR / Marketing professional ready to help you 'make waves.' Aloha!

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