



CELEBRATING
55 YEARS

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Don't go in circles trying to stand out from competition - Stanley Hurwitz

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So what exactly is public relations? How does it work, and how is it different from advertising? Glad you asked.

Advertising is paid media so ads appear in special areas of the media. People know you bought the online or print space. With PR, however, using unique angles and good writing, the goal is to convince reporters or editors to use the story as is or write their own (more objective?) version. The story appears in the news section. A story has more credibility than an ad because it was independently verified by a trusted third party rather than purchased. News story space doesn't cost anything, though your business pays the PR person to research, write and pitch the story.

Here's a real-life example of how PR works. Several years ago, a client that made loans to borrowers looking to buy revenue-producing things like carnival rides and coin-operated equipment, planned to celebrate the company's 40th anniversary. My assignment: How to make them stand out from their competition as an interesting, creative business.

Of course we bought ads in the major trade publications geared toward their targeted industries. But the goal was to further differentiate my client – and that's where PR comes in.

Almost anyone who grew up in southern New England in the middle of the 20th century visited Nantasket Beach in Hull, Mass. In the late 1800's, it was one of the region's premier resorts. On hot summer days, the sandy beach, lavish hotels and amusements attracted 100,000 visitors each day who came by paddle steamboat from Boston. Presidents Grover Cleveland and Calvin Coolidge summered here.

A major attraction was the Paragon Park amusement park. After a fire, it was rebuilt and in 1928 a new carousel was installed – a hand-carved masterpiece by the Philadelphia Toboggan Co. The colorful merry-go-round had 66 horses, two Roman chariots, a Wurlitzer organ, and ornately scalloped canopy. Visitors had so much fun they forget to look up and appreciate the 35 original paintings, 36 cherubs and 18 goddesses who watched riders glide by. Paragon's roller coaster and arcades were removed in 1984 to make room for condos. Only the Carousel survives today.

Research brought me to the website of the nonprofit that raises funds to keep the carousel operational and looking good. In exchange for a donation, we reserved photography time before the Carousel opened one day. I arranged for my client's management team to ride the horses while a professional photographer took lots of entertaining photos. The headline for my story: "Creative Financing Solutions Through Economic Ups & Downs." Unique stories and fun photos appeared in industry and general media. The article was posted on social media and on the company website, and hard copies were inserted in outgoing mailings and distributed at trade shows.

Successful business people should pay attention to running their business and not run around in circles trying to do their own PR. That's where I come in!

Stanley Hurwitz is principal of Creative Communications in Plymouth, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540