

ANY PRESS IS GOOD PRESS: FACT OR FICTION?

Five steps to follow when you experience bad press

By Nicolle Martin

We've all heard the saying, "There is no such thing as bad publicity!" But if your friend wants to go to Chipotle for lunch, do you think twice and wonder if you will be sick afterwards? I know I do. I have heard too many news stories about people getting food poisoning and Chipotle locations being shut down (many times in many cities) to trust that I will not have the same issue.

Then there are the companies who experience bad press and their stock immediately plummets, sales go down and they have to spend millions to try to counter the negative publicity. Remember the BP oil spill in the Gulf? They had to shell out millions to rebuild their image and gain the market's trust again. How about Target, Facebook and all the other companies who have recently experienced a data breach? Do you trust them when they want your personal data? Look at Harvey Weinstein. Would you ever consider working with his company? I could go on, but I think you get the picture.

So, the question remains...is any press good press? The answer is simple. No! This statement is one of the biggest myths of public relations! While it is great to get your name or company in the press, you want it to be there for the right reasons.

There are so many things in today's world of technology that could go wrong – an employee could make a negative comment, your technology may not do what it is advertised to do for someone, your company's security may be breached, etc. But whatever it is, you need to stay on top of it and make sure you are communicating with your customer base and the market about what you are doing to fix the problem. So, while we can't always have only positive press, here are some steps to take if you have something negative written about your offering or company:

Step One: Make sure you have a public relations person you trust on your team that can help you craft the messaging needed to manage the damage. Pull together a crisis communication plan if necessary. Make sure the messaging you are bringing to the market is a better representation of the company.

Step Two: Use social media to respond. Address the negativity right away. Getting out in front of what people are saying and talking about it might be your best option. Sometimes this is as simple as correcting the information. Whatever the case, it's important to keep in mind that information spreads

very quickly in today's social media-obsessed world so being on top of what is out there is very important.

Step Three: Be honest. If something was not done the way it should have been, be accountable. Say you are sorry. Offer a solution and show your expertise and dedication to the market.

Step Four: Continue with your PR and marketing efforts. Don't stop marketing your company. While you need to acknowledge and address the situation, you still want to keep selling your product or service! Don't let this completely change your efforts.

Step Five: Move on. While you may want to add some messaging to your efforts in the future to contradict or address whatever the issue was, don't continue to beat yourself up. Work with your PR professional to get positive coverage in the market that you can promote.

The most important thing to remember is that, if your response is done correctly, you can regain the trust of your customers over time.



About the Author

Nicolle Martin is a senior account manager for Edge Marketing. She has more than 18 years of experience doing public relations and marketing in the legal industry. At Edge, she works with clients to market their companies through many different avenues.

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