

PR- its importance

Specialties · By Simon Townsend · 2 min read

Public Relations (PR) is an important part of being a freelance journalist. Many journalists believe that journalists and PRs are opposites. The journalist is trying to tell the world the truth, while the PR is trying to put a positive spin on the product of her client, which means exaggeration of good points and ignoring or minimisation of bad points. PRs are scathingly referred to by journalists as "spin doctors". You see "spin" at work in the TV show Spin City. But the fact is, journalists can't do their jobs quickly and efficiently without some help or a lot of help from PRs. That's an important truth in the media world today. Understanding the role of Public Relations people (or "publicity" or "promotion" people) is CRUCIAL to your success because of the huge and vital role these guys play in the media. Apart from arranging appointments for you to phone or meet their clients, they can also arrange for you to be given quickly photographs, biographies, copies of media stuff, facts and so on. Many important people you want to talk to are listed in the phone book and you'll run in to them at your supermarket. But the rich, the powerful and the superstars are surrounded by assistants, helpers, bodyguards, secretaries, drivers . . . and PR people. You won't get to these tall poppies through their personal staff. But you might get to them through their PR people. The PR's job is first, to make sure (as far as possible) that this Very Important Person is presented with a positive spin. Secondly, the PR's job is to make sure that the publicity is maximised. No matter how famous and media-exposed a VIP may become, publicity is part of what makes more and more money for them, or helps them gain more and more power and prestige. Even our Australian prime minister, in whom every media outlet is interested every day, has a PR team of 21 people. A PR person can make your job easy, or impossible. So be nice to them and realise they are PART of how this whole crazy media business goes around and around. Don't get annoyed when a PR person put limits or conditions on your doing an interview with his VIP. Argue, debate, haggle . . . but in the end you'll have to accept the conditions. Why? Because the PR might be laying down the rules to you, but the rules are actually coming from the VIP. You can't complain to the VIP: "Your PR woman said I could interview you only if I promised not to ask about your jail sentence, but I know you won't mind." Oh yes she will !! It was she who laid down the rule. So never double-cross a PR person. And likewise, expect and demand that they keep their promises to you.

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