

5 Steps to Creating Public Relations Goals for Professional Services Firms

It's the beginning of a new year, and many people are thinking about what they want to accomplish. Professional service firms are also faced with planning initiatives to better their companies, many of which will include public relations strategies to develop tactics and processes to achieve certain outcomes. If you don't have a clear outcome in mind, it's challenging to create an effective strategy, which makes setting goals one of the most important things you can do to help yourself attain results.

With a specific, measurable goal in mind, you can work backwards to plan and identify the necessary steps to achieve that goal. Otherwise, you risk aimlessly executing ideas whose outcomes are difficult to identify and track, which equates to a lot of frustration, and wasted time and energy.

Additionally, a business goal requires more than just intent and a plan. It has to align with your company's overall objectives, such as service, profit or growth. It also must match your firm's mission and culture.



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Creating Public Relations Goals

To create an attainable PR goal, use these five steps.

1. Reflect on Past PR Campaigns and Experiences

There is a lot of insight to be gained from looking backward. Think about the high points, low points and any pivotal moments from the past year. What did you learn from these experiences? What did you accomplish? What do you still want to accomplish? What didn't work? If a PR goal is carried over from last year, it may be helpful to reset your approach – an intentional shift away from what wasn't working to new tactics that will produce better results. Perhaps you tried to raise brand awareness in a new market by speaking at local events, but didn't see much return. This year, try talking with local media outlets or writing articles for local publications.

2. Write Down What You Want to Accomplish in Your PR Program

Scientific studies show that people who **write down their goals** achieve what they want to at a significantly higher rate than those who only think about those goals. The act of putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) makes an idea more tangible, adds intentionality and holds you more accountable because it forces you to clarify what you want to accomplish. Written goals also make it easier to assess success along the way, enabling you to see what you've achieved and what still needs to be done. Moreover, as the year goes on and new opportunities arise, having written goals will keep you focused

and on course with your PR program, reducing your chances of getting sidetracked by other projects.

3. Create SMART PR Goals

We've all heard it before, but setting **SMART goals** – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Sensitive – really is one of the smartest things you can do when mapping out what you want to accomplish.

Specific: Think about what you really want to achieve and what is going to help your business the most. Vague statements such as “engage with more journalists” or “increase the company’s social media presence” often don’t equate to much change. Instead, determine clear, quantitative goals. For example, “coordinate one media interview per quarter” or “grow LinkedIn followers by 50 percent.”

Measurable: Change doesn’t happen all at once. Break down the ultimate goal into smaller milestones that you can focus on one step at a time, which makes it easy to track your progress. Checking off each step will keep you motivated and excited as you get closer to the end result. Think about questions such as how much, how many and how will I know when it’s accomplished. You should also think about what method you will use to evaluate your progress, making sure that the method is quantifiable by establishing key performance indicators such as number of interviews or speaking engagements obtained.

Achievable: Be realistic – focus on what you can control and make sure you have the resources you need to be successful. It’s great to want to tackle a large or complex initiative, but don’t make it so lofty of an idea that you set yourself up for failure. Consider obstacles that may come up in the process – for instance, necessary approvals, budget or technology glitches – and be practical when thinking about the skills needed to accomplish the task. For example, it’s difficult to develop a website if you don’t know any programming languages.

Relevant: Go beyond immediate tasks and think about the big picture to make sure your PR goals fit within your organization’s overall mission. The goals should align with your company’s culture, strategy and needs. You may want to increase market share, but that may not be important to senior leadership. If the objective doesn’t support your organization’s values or vision, it probably isn’t worthwhile and will prove to be a bad use of your time.

Time-Sensitive: Every goal needs an estimated timeframe and target deadline to facilitate focus and motivation. Many times, a long-term goal will get pushed to the side for everyday tasks, and no progress will be made for months, or even years. It’s important to find a way to balance your daily responsibilities while keeping the longer-term initiatives a priority.

4. Execute Your PR Plan and Review Regularly

Periodic check-ins are crucial to ensure you’re on the right path and making progress. Communicate with members of your team and management regularly so everyone understands how things are progressing and how each person’s efforts are affecting the

goal. Sometimes you may need to adapt your PR plan to fit new circumstances or needs. Also, don't get discouraged if you get off track. Recognize that things come up and [we all hit roadblocks](#). But once you realize you're off course, figure out how and when it makes sense to refocus your attention back on the goal.

5. Celebrate the Victories

When you achieved a goal, big or small, take the time to enjoy the satisfaction of having done it. Be proud of yourself for accomplishing something you set out to do, and don't be afraid to share your success with others. As PR professionals, we often tout others' successes, so it's nice to be able to share good news of our own with colleagues and clients. And if achieving the goal was a team effort, give praise where praise is due and celebrate together. Commemorating the "wins" renews people's motivation and recognizes all of the hard work, time and energy that went into the project.

Need help developing your firm's PR goals? Reach out to me, Rachel Sisserson, at rsisserson@jaffepr.com.