

Pulling PR costings out of a hat

 By [Marion Scher](#)

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I was recently asked to quote for a media consultancy job by a Cape Town company. It's a pretty straightforward job as they're a small company with an extremely niche product. Therefore there are only so many publications, radio and television that would find their product newsworthy.

I quoted on the job based on the fact I would produce a press listing for them together with a range of angles and a 12-month media plan putting the whole project together. I would add here, that as I'm *not* a public relations practitioner myself, they would then have to deal with the media directly. I would write any releases or stories necessary but they would then place these. This apparently was 'no problem.' In fact, I find that many media, especially trade and business to business, prefer this.

They hadn't told me initially, but my quote came in at a fraction of the original quote from a large public relations company. So you are probably saying around now 'Ah - but who would do the hard slog of dealing with the media'? And I agree, once editorial coverage is published, the charges are often worth it.

It was only when I presented them with the promised work, did the two partners of this company look at each other with a look of amazement and a wry smile and told me my work was the 'antithesis' of what they received from the other company.

What are the client's needs?

Now I'm not trying to say don't use public relations companies or I know how to do it best - but what I am saying, yet again, is don't just pull a round number out of a hat. These days fees seem to go from R100,000 to R150,000 and majorly upwards with nothing in between. I know large companies have big rents and staff to pay for - but surely taking the time to really look at the client's needs and time involved to deliver counts?

Anyone can grab The Media List and produce a kilometre's worth of names, emails and phone numbers - often out of date, of course - but to take the time to find out a) if that publication ever publishes stories such as the client's, and which journalists (generally freelancers) write for them, makes a massive difference. Quality over quantity...

It's easy, for instance, to say 'we can get you on such and such a chat show' - and maybe you could, but what are the real odds? And how would you find that hook to get them on?

There's no 'one size fits all' release

This brings me finally to THE press release. One size fits all. Well, it doesn't. In this client's case, even though their product is a machine that services particular industries, there are quite a lot of angles for stories. This just takes time, research, digging and talking to people in the industry. Had the public relations company done this? An emphatic 'No'.

I know I'm about to get the wrath of the public relations community come down on me - and, as always, I want to clarify the above by saying I know there are many superb public relations practitioners out there - but sadly, there are still many who fit into this mould.

Perhaps the bottom line in this tough economy is that you have to offer more - go the extra mile. Know your business...

ABOUT MARION SCHER

Marion Scher (www.mediamentors.co.za) is an award-winning journalist, lecturer, media trainer and consultant with 25 years' experience in the industry. For more of her writing, go to her Bizcommunity profile or to Twitter @marionscher.

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