



Make no mistake about it

In this exclusive extract from her upcoming business book, *“From PR to Profit”*, aesthetic PR specialist **Julia Kendrick** tells us avoid the top seven mistakes in PR and marketing

Many practitioners find PR and marketing can be a confusing minefield, where expectations and results sometimes vary wildly, leading to disappointment and a perceived lack of ROI. In this extract from my upcoming business book, *“From PR to Profit”*, I will explore how to avoid the seven most common mistakes in PR and marketing, helping you get things right first time and keep your aesthetic business ahead of the curve!

MISTAKE 1: ALL OR NOTHING BUDGETING

Launch activities tend to be the most expensive projects and can often take the lion's share of the annual promotional budget. However, if there is no strategy or budgeting for

ongoing maintenance of that hard-won visibility through a consistent PR and marketing plan, you are losing out on the long game and will likely need MORE investment to regain your position than it would have cost you just to maintain it effectively in the first place. Any kind of 'one hit wonder' campaign which sees you putting all your proverbial budgeting eggs in one basket is a high-risk strategy - and what happens to your customer touchpoints for the rest of the year? We know that to maximise customer loyalty and repeat revenue we need consistent, relevant and useful contact. Whether you run your own PR and marketing or have a PR supplier, it is vital to map out your core activity plan and budget to ensure there are no gaping holes where visibility and engagement could plummet and allow a competitor to



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step in. Suppliers understand that you only have finite budget and resources, but it is your joint responsibility to plan and distribute these efficiently to achieve your business objectives.

MISTAKE 2: NO CLEAR OBJECTIVES

In my opinion, this is the number one underlying reason behind the general perception that PR doesn't deliver valuable return on investment (or was a disappointing experience). On a weekly basis, I'll get a call saying, "I just want some help with my PR" and this is the extent of the brief! For businesses wishing to engage the services of a PR agency, a clear and detailed brief is an absolute necessity. If you haven't done the basic thinking about what you're looking to achieve, over what timeframe, how you expect to see the results and what you're willing to spend - how can you expect to secure a service which truly meets your needs? It is inviting a 'pin the tail on the donkey' approach which will

likely leave you disappointed and frustrated by the results. Similarly, if a PR supplier doesn't receive a sufficient client brief, it is their responsibility to probe and question before taking on the account to avoid mismatched expectations and ultimately, poor deliverables. Without clarity on the objectives, you have no way to determine whether campaigns were successful or worth the investment - so this is a mandatory step before undertaking any activity.

MISTAKE 3: NO MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

This mistake is intrinsically linked to the previous, in that a successful PR or marketing campaign needs clear objectives outlined at the start, alongside distinct evaluation at the end. Without measurables, you cannot accurately determine campaign success, effectiveness or ROI. Because PR is more about influence and third-party endorsement, it has traditionally been more difficult to assess but this does not mean outputs cannot be effectively measured. Your customers are a key source of information and measurement of your marketing success: do you routinely ask them how they heard about you and capture this information? Was it a personal recommendation? Did they see an advert or an article (and in which outlet?) and decide to make an appointment? With the increased move to digital and web marketing, we can determine with much greater accuracy the effect of communications on customer behaviour. As a minimum, you should have analytics set up on your website and social media channels to monitor results and outputs against PR and marketing activities. Not all PR outputs boil down to new customers and sales; it could be that through raising your profile and reputation you're invited to speak at an event, partner with another business, comment in the media - being seen more as a leader in the space. Regular, well-defined measurables will not only more accurately define your successes and that all-important ROI - they allow you to adapt your approach as required, rather than burning budget on ineffective strategies.

MISTAKE 4: NO UNIQUE SELLING POINTS (USPs)

This issue is multi-layered: firstly, there can be a total lack of USPs or thinking behind this vital positioning. The challenge is to go back and either find something unique, or create something unique that you can use. When operating in a crowded, competitive arena like medical aesthetics you shouldn't even get into the ring without a robust set of messages and USPs that stand out from the crowd and appeal to your key audiences. You need to answer the five W's (Who, What, Where, Why, When and How) using powerful language or claims that your competitors can't touch - or at the very least, that overlap as little as possible. This is where the second issue may arise; you have 'USPs' but in fact, everyone else is saying almost the same thing. There is an overwhelming reliance among clinics and practitioners on positioning treatment offerings as USPs which in fact there is much greater >

brand equity and value in communicating your personal ethos and approach. Think about what you offer, that nobody else can.

MISTAKE 5: THINKING “CAN’T WE JUST ADVERTISE”?

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not railing against advertising in general: the underlying mistake is thinking that any singular PR or marketing activity delivered to the exclusion of all else is an effective long-term strategy with strong ROI. Marketing communications is an interconnected system which works best when there are elements of PR, marketing, advertising and branding delivered over a sustained period. I've experienced big brand clients pulling the plug on PR or stripping it down to the bone for months at a time to funnel budget into advertising – forgetting about the trade-off between visibility and influence, between telling people you're great and having others endorse you by giving message on your behalf. PR and advertising are often seen at loggerheads, but ultimately both aim to influence audiences to make a decision – they just approach this in different ways. A strong communications strategy should include multiple marketing tools and not rely on any one technique over the long-term.

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MISTAKE 6: “IGNORING BAD NEWS OR REVIEWS”

Given that our industry is subject to varying levels of regulation – from stringent laws to guidelines and recommendations – there is ample opportunity for things to fall through the cracks, leaving your business exposed. To protect your brand reputation, it is essential to take an active stance when it comes to trends, events or issues directly affecting your line of work or product. Rather than sitting on the fence, allowing others to educate or correct the public and media, ensure you are taking an active role in providing information, insight and thought leadership. If you don't keep your customers abreast of what's going on, someone else will and at best, this will make you look lazy or unconcerned – at worst they may receive the wrong information altogether, so take control. Secondly, make sure you take this approach with 'halo' issues affecting bigger topics or issues in the industry. Highlighting your own commitment to safety and quality,

or showcasing how you approach things differently are important ways to not only reassure current and potential customers, they reinforce and protect your brand from negative attrition and elevate you above competitors.

MISTAKE 7: JUST GET ME IN THE DAILY MAIL!

A more light-hearted one to finish, but as the old saying goes... “If I had a pound for every time” I have been asked by a client to just get them into a media title... Clients can often be overly-fixated on gaining exposure in a particular media outlet, using this outcome as a measure of success for the entire PR and marketing programme. Unless all your target customers are encapsulated within that one title, and they all read that one article and all take action – this is not going to replace the above steps in terms of a well-planned, balanced and targeted marketing campaign. There is no doubt that gaining exposure in particularly influential titles can deliver a huge spike in brand awareness, demand and sales – but it is not a magic wand. The underlying structure and hard work around these ‘star’ pieces is what solidified the brand reputation and prevents the one-shot wonder effect – again, thinking of the big picture reputation, not just short-lived exposure.

CONCLUSION

When delivered effectively, PR and marketing can significantly grow your business 'brand' and revenue potential, as well as tackling competitors and engaging with your target audiences. You should now have a good understanding of the seven most common PR and marketing pitfalls which can seriously undermine your chances of business success – not to mention sapping your time and energy. By following the insights and learnings above, you will now be able to confidently implement strategies to deliver effective PR and marketing which supports and amplifies your business – all of which will help your aesthetic business stay ahead of the curve! **AM**



Julia Kendrick is an award-winning communications and PR consultant specialising in medical aesthetics. With over 12 years' experience, Julia delivers a unique strategic approach to help aesthetic brands, clinics and practitioners build and grow their reputation, stand out from the crowd and secure tangible business growth. Kendrick is a regular industry media contributor, congress presenter and trainer.
julia@kendrickpr.uk | www.kendrickpr.uk/elite | @JRKendrick | +44 78970 711 037