

## **Six reasons why hiring an independent PR professional instead of a multi-layered agency is a smart move**

In the good old / bad old days, I am afraid there was some truth in the mythology of PR: expenses limitless, lunch hours long. If the client was taken to the races, the theatre, or Le Gavroche, the client paid for it.

Some agencies charged mark-ups on third party supplier work such as photography, design or print in the region of 25% - and in some case higher. Staff travelled first class or were driven when out and about on client business.

Today's independent PR practitioners have a completely different relationship with their clients. It's truly up close and personal. There are no layers of bureaucracy to hide underneath and no bag carriers to hide behind. Transparency is the name of the game.

Number one is **cost**. Today's independent PR person doesn't usually have anyone but him or herself to blame if the sums are wrong. Clients will – quite rightly – scrutinize the bill and investigate any anomalies. And they want to be sure they're getting value for money too.

Next is **chemistry**. The person who pitches for, and wins, your business is undoubtedly the person who will be working on your account. So you know from the start whether you can build a good relationship. Some big agencies have dedicated 'pitch' teams – the people who work on winning your business may never be seen again.

Then there's **accountability**. In the multi-layered corporate PR business you'll find the CEO or MD (who will claim, at the pitch to be involved on your account on a day to day basis, rarely to be heard from again, at least until you sack the agency), the Account Director, who will be overseeing the needs of a large portfolio of client business and supervising a team of considerable size, the Account Manager, the Account Executive and the Account Assistant.

That's an awful lot of people with merely a partial interest in your business. The independent knows that he or she must deliver – or be damned.

And there's **accessibility**. If there's you, and only you, to pick up the phone, you make very sure you can always be reached – holidays, sickness it doesn't matter. If you're the PR person you're always on call. So the client is assured he or she can always reach you.

Instead of trotting out the same old formulaic approach, today's independent is aware of the constant need to exceed expectation, so he or she will offer a high degree of **creativity**. Whether working alone, or brainstorming or client sharing with another experienced PR professional, the independent practitioner knows he or she is only as good as the last project.

Finally, and probably most important, is **experience**.

To have maintained a decent life style as an independent over a number of years, the PR person shows that he or she has been doing quite a lot of something right. As a potential client, you should ask the independent you're considering for current and past client references. Most will offer these before you even ask.

The good/bad old days are well and truly over.

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