

PRWEEK

March 26, 2001

Economic woes make PR a bigger factor than ever

This letter is in response to the May 14 editorial "Hi-tech PR: was it all froth and hype." Well, now that the "new economy" is history, it's time to take stock and look for lessons learned. The prevailing climate of consumer and investor skepticism actually gives us a chance to scrutinize the craft of PR itself.

True, the marketplace is fed up with the snake-oil hucksterism of recent years and underqualified pitch and place youngsters, but that doesn't mean that PR is unimportant in

the post-dot-com doldrums. Investor skepticism can't halt technological progress. As newsworthy advances continue to occur, we must lay the groundwork for future success.

The right PR campaign is essential for capturing mind-share and building momentum, even in a slow market. It builds presence in the perceptions of peers and consumers alike.

This is not the time to fall silent and wait for things to happen. Take a lesson from smart investors – they know that a down market is ripe with investment opportunities. Those who risk a little today stand to be ahead when the race resumes.

By all means, though, stick with a solid, well-crafted approach. When you spin a story, keep the expectations realistic. Communicate real-world solutions effectively. Be factual and know who you are addressing. Find the real news in the story and lead with it. Instead of snowing them with technical specs, focus on specific benefits.

If you want your message read, get rid of jargon and hyperbole. If you're not the market leader, avoid false claims or suggestions that could derail your efforts in journalists' eyes. Talk about what makes the company product/service unique.

Lastly, keep in mind that the objective of effective PR remains the same in any market: to instill and maintain market confidence. So make a plan. Broadcast your achievements and successes. That is our job as PR execs – to focus on growing the business, even in the most difficult business climate.

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