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PUBLIC RELATION FIRMS AND MEDIA AGENCIES

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Broadening the concept of PR: Take a look at allied opportunities

Some of the most valuable and successful components of PR and marketing strategies specifically targeted to the real estate industry must include successfully integrating traditional with digital platforms. Remember, marketing and public relations are tactical. You don't have to fire all of your missiles at once. Your offense depends on one with the most targeted impact.

In the building industry people need to trust that when a new community is being developed, rentals are available, and zoning is underway, every consideration will be given to protect the existing neighborhood and community lifestyle. With editorial opportunities becoming scarcer due to circulation slippage, alternate ways of promoting success and successful operations, growth, and nuances of site specific locations, become challenging. You need to get your messages across expediently, instantly and compellingly. And, most importantly, consistently reinforce the reputation of the builder, brand loyalty, community enrichment and commitment to quality of life.

In the past, a highly effective public relations' tool was to accrue awards and commendations. If they didn't exist – we created them or the various award designations and programs (e.g. Carole



Carole Felton

Felton Communications developed "The Pennies", the William Penn Awards of Excellence for the Building Industry Association of Philadelphia, to recognize achievement in commercial and residential development in Philadelphia, to compete with suburban award programs in the regional real estate industry). Announcing and re-broadcasting these honors in press releases was a way of maximizing the builder or associate's credibility, polishing up the reputation and getting "ink" all in the same brushstroke. Times change and so must the paradigm.

The new social media (numerous digital platforms available to individuals, companies, organizations, projects, programs, events) offer a "readership" that transcends traditional collateralization and branding tools. Along with

the convergence of strategic communications and social media there is an additional need for managing online representation and reviews.

Today's consumer, user and buyer, must be targeted in an increasing diffuse digital landscape. While your message and mission should be consistent, continuous and contiguous (each feeding off of the other), there is interaction like never before. Permission based marketing gives us both the opportunity, as well as the privilege, to transmit multiple messages, 24/7. As with any privilege, comes responsibility and scrutiny.

Clients outsource the responsibility of not merely researching, compiling, writing and disseminating news releases, creating events and implementing a social marketing program that creates and maintains "buzz", but which incorporates digital marketing via social media platforms as well as advising on content and design for inbound and outbound link building. Requesting a flier is increasingly becoming less common in comparison to supplying advice about Fan Page, AB Testing, nurtured leads, SEO, and planning a Drip Campaign. Statistical data requested may include what percentage of decision-makers are accessing e-mails via smart phones (approximately

65%). Demographical information will include knowing current purchasing decisions made by females (80% according to various sources).

Working with baby boomers, one of my own areas of specialty within real estate and subject of several of my columns in *Distinctive Homes & Lifestyle Magazine* of the Delaware Valley (distinctive-homesmagazine.com) represents a major marketing shift within the real estate industry. Buying criteria, lifestyle modifications all are essential in meeting this major demographic. The "go to generation" (a term I coined for this group), is unlike any other in our country's history, in both magnitude and uniqueness. For marketers, this offers challenges and also accomplishment in forging content, concept and strategy.

There are smart and effective ways to integrate today's social media and digital platforms which will amplify traditional marketing. There is no magic elixir but if you are savvy about the way(s) that you are getting your message out, reinforcing your brand and your significance in the marketplace, you will grow your bottom line.

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