



What's the Difference Between Advertising and Public Relations (PR)?

"Advertising you pay for. PR you pray for."
Anonymous

Today's consumers are far more distracted and cynical about buying products and services than previous generations. They are overwhelmed by the torrent of advertising on network and local TV, cable, radio, magazines, newspapers, and increasingly on the Internet. They know that advertising is a paid endorsement of a product or service designed to persuade them to purchase. They give more credibility to what they see, hear or read when it comes from news sources. This is one aspect of public relations (PR), sometimes called publicity. Positive publicity builds goodwill and exposure.

"The birth of a brand is achieved by publicity, not advertising."
Al Ries, Co-author of "The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding"

PR is a more cost-effective marketing tool than advertising, but it's only part of a complete marketing strategy. Small companies can often cut through clutter dramatically by using publicity to build awareness. A well-written press release can dramatically expose a person, product or service and create a "buzz." People start talking about you! However, once the message is delivered to the media, control of that message passes into their hands. Unlike advertising, which is guaranteed to run, there are no guarantees that a press release will be picked up and covered by the media.

"A public relations firm said that rock star David Lee Roth owes them over \$110,000. The strange thing is that it's the first time that Roth has had any publicity in ten years."
Conan O'Brien, "Late Night with Conan O'Brien," NBC

Another rock group, Dr. Hook & the Medicine Show, wrote a song about PR. It's called "Cover of the Rolling Stone."

"Well, we're big rock singers
We've got golden fingers
And we're loved everywhere we go (*that sounds like us*)
We sing about beauty and we sing about truth
For ten-thousand dollars a show (*right*)
We take all kinds of pills that give us all kinds of thrills
But the thrill we've never known
Is the thrill that'll get ya when you get your picture
On the cover of the Rolling Stone.

(*Rolling Stone*) Wanna see my picture on the cover
(*Stone*) Wanna buy five copies for my mother (*yeah*)
(*Stone*) Wanna see my smilin' face
On the cover of the Rolling Stone."

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Public speaking is another element of PR that can be very compelling. A person speaking as an expert may be quoted elsewhere as well. This generates even more valuable credibility. It is a powerful way to build exposure for a person, product or service.

“Seventy percent of success in life is showing up.”
Woody Allen

Still a little confused
about the difference?
You're not alone.

Check out this definition.

Main Entry: **pub-lic-i-ty**

Pronunciation: (")p&-'bli-s&-tE, -'blis-tE

Function: *noun*

Date: 1791

1 : the quality or state of being [public](#)

2 a : an act or device designed to attract [public](#) interest; *specifically* : information with news value issued as a means of gaining [public](#) attention or support **b** : the dissemination of information or promotional material **c** : **paid advertising** **d** : [public](#) attention or acclaim

(Source: **Merriam-Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary 10th Edition** at <http://www.m-w.com/home.htm>)