



# THE POWER OF PR

## IF YOU'VE GOT A GREAT PRODUCT OR COOL COMPANY AND YOU'RE AFTER SUCCESS, YOU NEED TO TELL THE WORLD ALL ABOUT IT. HERE'S HOW TO GO PUBLIC AND MAKE IT ALL ABOUT PR, PR, DARLING. BY JOANNA HALL.

**S**o you've got a great business, be it a product or a service, and even though everyone should love it and want it in vast quantities, sales just aren't reaching expected levels. You can shout all you like from the rooftops about how good you are, but the reality is you're probably not reaching the right people.

As the saying goes, the best product in the world is worth nothing if nobody knows about it, and an effective public relations strategy can turn a great idea into a money-making one as well.

PR is more than just spin-doctoring and covering up celebrity gaffes – it's an effective way for small to medium businesses to target specific markets that will want a product or service.

Take Brisbane-based Reborne Australia as an example. Launched at the end of 2003 by Jorma Oksanen, the company had the opportunity to distribute the little-known Swedish skincare range Shi'Jäno in Australia and Asia.

What set the Shi'Jäno creams apart from an already crowded market was scientific backing – the *British Journal of Dermatology* carried out an independent study which confirmed the key ingredient in its face cream actually reduced the appearance of ageing.

"We knew we had a great product, which was scientifically proven, but we realised early that we would need good PR to get the message out there," says Oksanen.

"We needed to establish, with the resources at our disposal, that we had a point of difference to the competition in the market place. We felt we had something that would really excite the public, and we needed to make them aware of it.

"And we needed to do this with a very limited budget. When you're operating on a shoestring budget, and competing with big-name players with multi-million-dollar advertising budgets, you have to work even harder."

On the advice of experienced public relations consultants, Reborne's strategy involved targeting beauty editors of newspapers and magazines, backed up with limited advertising. The end result? From a tiny serviced office with zero turnover in 2003, Reborne now turns over \$20 million a year.

According to Sydney-based Polkadot PR's director, Dionne Moskow, the key to any successful campaign is to obtain the services of a publicist who is strategic and has good relationships with people in the mainstream media that relate to their particular industry.

The first thing that you do with clients is to identify their target market, and then work out

what they read, what they listen to and what they watch, says Moskow. Secondly, you identify their point of difference – the unique selling point of what they're offering. Then you identify the angles that will appeal to the media because even if someone has a sexy product in a cool industry it doesn't mean it's going to be marketable.

Clever and strategic PR can turn the decidedly uncool, such as dealing with dog poo, into an overnight success story. It happened to Tobi Skovron and his fiancée Simone Iglicki.

They developed The Pet Loo – a hygienic device allowing dogs to do their business, in a mess-free and sanitary manner, on a synthetic grass 'backyard in a box' with a draining system. Dog owners

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themselves, the couple conceptualised the product in November 2003, but it only took off in July 2006 after The Pet Loo featured on ABC television program *The New Inventors*.

"We knew all along the idea was a good one, and we knew then that this was a golden opportunity for us, so we launched a PR campaign," recalls Skovron.

The Pet Loo won the show's People's Choice award, and overnight the duo received orders for 500 units and soon grew from 10 retailers stocking the product to more than 300 within 10 months.

The biggest task was to capitalise on the media attention received, explains Skovron. "We made sure that press releases were sent out to the appropriate media outlets and basically made sure our message made it through to the right people.

"It really took off at a rapid pace. We knew we had a unique product that would work, and we managed to back that up with a good PR campaign that really helped the business grow into what it is today."

The Pet Loo is now distributed in seven countries, and by the end of the year Skovron and Iglicki expect it to be on the market in at least 14 countries.

"We're already looking at a second and third PR campaign and we believe that gaining editorial exposure is the key for us," says Skovron. "Advertising is okay and has its place, but the PR approach we've taken has delivered far better results than we could have hoped for."