



“PR is NOT My Job”

This is a common sentiment of executives who serve on the company’s management team, but do not carry public relations in their portfolio.

There are a variety of reasons executives side-step involvement with public relations. Sometimes it is due to a personal discomfort with public appearances and other times it is because an executive feels overextended with his or her present responsibilities. On occasion, this attitude is because the executive genuinely believes that another individual is more expert to handle that role. Of course, there are also times when avoidance is simply because he honestly has no experience dealing with the press and needs training.

This brings us to the important question of who is the right company representative to speak with reporters.

Public relations professionals can serve effectively in the roles of coach, advisor, and staff support. PR staff can drive strategies and messages, respond to inquires, and educate the media and all audiences who have contact with the story. They are an important professional partner to have prepare, screen, redirect, and/or respond to competitive issues that shouldn’t be attributed to “c” level execs. However, as a company’s position and reputation are built and the marketplace evolves, there are times when the stature or expertise of an officer cannot be replaced with another.

On Center Stage

As a senior member of your company’s management team, you represent your company. All of the time.

This is serious business. You are right that if you are not prepared and will not address the journalist’s needs, then it is best for you to NOT take an interview. Not all executives are excellent spokespeople. However, most, in collaboration with PR staff, can come across very well.

Here are a few steps for preparing for an interview with your PR professional:

- Know the reporter’s topic
- Know the reporter’s background, if available
- Know the key messages that PR is providing to media and using consistently with other company spokespeople
- Have brief and usable interview talking points and research at-hand for your interview
- Have a PR professional present, whenever possible, to be sure they catch any nuance or need you may have missed and take responsibility for the follow up
- Don’t give unsubstantiated info or speculative numbers and expectations that can backfire

Why Execs Care about PR?

It is your reputation. That’s why.

Public relations shapes the company’s position in the marketplace with customers, shareholders, employees and prospective partners.

- Are you interested in how investors respond to company’s performance?
- Do you want customers to view your company as one seamless, reliable entity in the aftermath of a merger or acquisition or in a global or multi-market climate?
- Are you prepared for the consequences of creating a situation when a “no comment” or unrelated professional would send a signal that someone has something to hide?
- Do you want to avoid or mitigate negative publicity for your company or yourself?
- Is it important that you demonstrate leadership and talent among the senior team?
- Are you interested in signing on new customers, many who will need confidence in management’s ability, commitment and veracity?
- Is it important to retain employees and attract new ones who reflect your corporate culture and choose your company over the competition?

If you answered “yes” to any one of these questions, you can be sure that your company’s stakeholders need to see a committed, confident, prepared, involved YOU.