



”Obsequious Tactics Mingled With Obfuscation” or
”How To Beat Them When They’re Not Looking”

Y’all have been pounded in your positions by heavy artillery for a long time. When you’re out-everything (out-manned, out-gunned, out-supplied), how do you beat the adversary that has it all? Well, you do it like those who have nothing but “grey matter” to work with - sorry, I couldn’t resist that.

You see, we’ve spent a lot of time talking about advertising and haven’t spent an iota on the most valuable resource that a small advertiser has in his armory - Public Relations. So this communique will deal with some of the basics and we’ll get into more as time goes by.

Some of the best military strategists that the Almighty ever created have used “PR” as a major asset: “Stonewall”; “Marse” Robert; “Ol’ Baldy”; and Forrest... not to mention John Singleton Mosby and “Stormin’ Norman”.

Let me explain. When your resources are limited you have to make the enemy think that you have more than you do. Or, you have to make your available resources work harder than the other guy. “Public Relations” goes a long way to doing that. It’s either in disseminating factual data and information ... or information and data you WANT them to think is factual (sorta like Ken Burns’ idea of history; or some politician’s idea of deficits and surpluses).

Besides, it’s a whole lot less expensive to write a press release and mail it than it is to produce an ad and place it. Understand too, a press release or story in the media about your company carries “news value” in the eyes of the discerning public. That obviously is not the case with an ad.

Most major companies haven’t figured out how to make “PR” accountable (much less advertising). But I’m here to tell you that good “PR” can do more than all the money you spend in advertising. Why do you think that politicians put more emphasis on PR than advertising? And the people who are in PR require the people in their business to be accredited. Check the accreditation from your agency account exec the next time you talk to them.

Anyway, “PR” is, pure and simple, “communications”. Sometimes it can be plain, simple, honest truths; sometimes you can stretch the truth a tad and make something sound like news when it really isn’t. If it gets printed or aired it then becomes gospel. Hallelujah!

The first thing you need to do is establish a constant and consistent information/disinformation program of press releases. What do you write about?



ANYTHING. New Location (even if you've been there for three years); New Employees (even if they are temps); Promotions (Promote yourself, and everyone in your organization, at least once every 6 - 9 months); New products (take old products and give them a new name). The second thing you do is make yourself known to the local business editor of the newspaper. It's amazing what a long lunch short on solid food will do. Nowadays they call it "schmoozin".

That's how you get all your press releases printed and, maybe, a story to boot.

But "PR" can do a lot more. All your press releases should be sent to all your clients, customers, and prospects. People you don't know, but want to, should get releases. Before Sharpsburg, a blue-suit found a battle plan wrapped around two cigars, forever known as the "Lost Orders". Do you really think they were left by accident?

However, PR isn't limited to media, it includes working with schools and civic groups; charities; political parties (though I think I'd rather face Berdan's Sharpshooters all by myself); retirement homes; any and all associations and groups that you can identify as having people who represent potential customers.

The next thing you do is plan a strategy just like you would for advertising, figuring out what makes the most sense, is the most cost-effective and can provide a reasonable "return on investment".

Depending on your business, it makes sense to become recognized as an "expert" in your field so that newspapers and magazines will call you for your opinion, and clubs and associations will ask you to speak. Incidentally, an "Expert" is usually someone who's more than fifty miles from his hometown. A "Consultant" is usually someone who's looking for a job.

Next time we'll get into the thick of it and start to cover some of the mechanics of Public Relations.
