



## **The Payoff and Pitfalls of Pay-Per-Performance PR:**

### ***Potentially rewarding results for energy firms seeking boosts in media coverage***

Public relations is more than just pitching the media so they'll write glowingly about your organization. It involves strategic planning, developing written communications, building relationships with influencers, having a sound social media presence, responding in times of crises, and many other critical responsibilities. Nonetheless, a common refrain among prospective new clients is "Can you get us on the cover of *TIME*?" (Or the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, or the *Podunk Prairie Review*.)

#### **Media Relations at a Premium**

What clients want is coverage, and when they want it is now. Yet while clients may salivate at the thought of a write-up in the *LA Times* or a featured spot on CNBC, there's often much groundwork that needs to be laid before such coverage is even realistic. That's why all facets of public relations require ongoing attention, either through an organization's internal process or with the help of an outside agency.

Even with decades of executive agency experience, I've yet to find two clients that are exactly alike, whether in oil and gas, computer technology, finance, or any other industry. Accordingly, each organization's PR plan must be unique, and a proper amount of time and resources should be devoted to all aspects of a PR program. Still, the media relations component is an important one, and timely exposure in the right publication or broadcast can boost company fortunes. That's why for some businesses, particularly those that have a clear understanding of who they are and where they want to go, but don't have the wherewithal to tackle media relations themselves, pay-for-performance PR agencies that specialize in delivering media relations results can be an invaluable service.

#### **The Pay-for-Performance Model**

A pay-for-performance PR agency model is attractive on a number of levels:

- It's typically risk-free. Reputable agencies only charge clients for results they deliver, so performance comes with a money-back guarantee. They always include rates that are consistent and transparent.
- More importantly, the agency pros behind the scenes are generally very skilled and laser-focused in targeting, finding, and capitalizing on top opportunities. As a result, pay-for-performance agencies are usually more successful in driving consistent media coverage than full-service agencies—after all, their business model (and 100 percent of their revenue) depends on it.
- For organizations that have clearly defined PR goals and handle many PR activities internally, but lack the bandwidth needed to conduct media relations, enlisting a pay-for-performance agency means they can concentrate on what they do best without having to pay monthly retainer fees to a full-service agency that includes costs for services they don't need.

Time and time again I've seen clients in situations where a pay-for-performance PR model will serve them better than a full-service agency. That's why my full-service agency, Stephenson Group, spun off PayPerClip, our sister agency, which does just that.

### **Things to Consider**

There's a time when a media relations push is appropriate, but a client must be well-positioned to support expected coverage. Also important, both parties need to be in agreement about what media will be targeted and have realistic expectations about the campaign's success.

Clients shouldn't expect a pay-for-performance PR model will necessarily save them money—it often won't. That should be a good thing, as paying more means the agency has done its job in delivering media coverage. Still, a client should choose wisely when selecting an agency. Some agencies may be given free rein without guidelines in place, and employ a shotgun approach to media relations that delivers a lot of (costly) hits, but not quality, valuable placements that good, reputable agencies can deliver.

At PayPerClip, we contact clients to confirm their buy-in once we have a sound opportunity so there's no question later about whether they'll find it worthwhile coverage. If, however, the planned article or feature spot doesn't appear as anticipated (or if coverage doesn't meet clients' expectations) any fees are reimbursed. This way everyone's happily on the same page and there are no surprises. What's more—and this is another important factor to consider—before even beginning a media relations campaign we query clients to determine the background of their spokespersons, the ideal coverage they seek, and similar considerations that enable us to best represent them.

## **Tapping PR Opportunities in the Oil and Gas Industry**

The oil and gas industry is one especially ripe for a PR program based on pay-for-performance. Since the market (more than a century old) is perhaps more established than any other, there's little need to prove its concept and viability but tremendous pressure for organizations to rise above the crowded competition they face. The best way to do this —and stake claims of market leadership—is to take advantage of press coverage opportunities in print, broadcast, and online that shine light on company accomplishments, interests, and initiatives.

As an agency with deep expertise and more than 20 years experience in the energy industry, PayPerClip has developed the strong ties and key media relationships that help bring voice to companies involved in oil and gas exploration, development, production, and investment. Whether you're a Fortune 500 firm or a small- to mid-size growth company, we help get coverage that puts your name and story in front of the key industry influencers, investors, analysts, and dealmakers who can make things happen. To learn more about our specific agency work for oil and gas clients, visit <http://www.payperclip.com/who-we-serve/energy/>.

## **When Media Relations Alone Isn't Enough**

While an organization might assume it only needs to enlist an agency for media relations, it can soon find itself seeking help in other important areas of PR, including writing services, media training, strategy and positioning, and more. If so, it helps if the same pay-per-performance agency can also provide these services so that messaging remains intact and all phases of activity are focused on the same goals. For instance, many PayPerClip clients take advantage of the various services offered by Stephenson Group, even if they typically handle PR internally. For clients unsure of whether they are ready for full-service, we also offer a 90-day program that lets them discover if a full-service agency or pay-per-performance initiative is the best overall fit. Again, the needs of each organization are unique; some require a reliance on strategy, some on tactics, some an emphasis on both. Whatever the case, there's a public relations program to meet the specific needs of any business, regardless of size or industry.

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