

The Amazon guide to **hiring a PR agency**

Amazon



What is public relations?

The discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour.

An organisation's reputation is one of its most valuable assets. Public relations can improve people's understanding of what you do and strengthen the way you are seen by those most important to you. A PR campaign can make people aware of a new service, encourage them to take part in an activity or challenge their misconceptions.

Public relations is about making sure your point is put across in the most powerful and effective way possible. It can place your name on everyone's lips by creating a splash of positive publicity. It can

change public opinion and behaviour by communicating through the channels people know and trust – consumer magazines, local or national news, social media – or by engaging people face to face in their own environment. Or it could reinforce members of your team as leading authorities in your field through media interviews or public appearances.

The approach will always depend on what you want to achieve and the context of your activity. A good PR agency will work closely with you to get to the core of your priorities and create a unique programme combining different approaches to reach the audiences most important to you.

At Amazon, we know the value of good public relations for not-for-profit and public sector organisations and our team has a wealth of experience, energy and ideas. We are committed to working in close partnership with our clients to make sure our activities match their objectives.



Photo credit: third-avenue.co.uk

Why use an agency?

A PR agency can contribute a fresh approach and offer expert advice, support and know-how based on extensive experience.

Working with a range of organisations gives agency practitioners valuable insight into what works and what doesn't and allows them to keep up to date with the latest developments in PR practice. A good agency will have cultivated excellent media contacts and developed in-depth knowledge of how to make things happen quickly, economically and effectively.

Many organisations have in-house press or public relations teams with valuable knowledge and experience of the issues facing their organisation. Employing a PR agency doesn't negate the value of an in-house team. Rather, a good PR agency is an extension of your own team, working alongside in-house staff to complement and build new ideas and methods into their wealth of experience.

In other organisations, staff may all be engaged in core activity with no time to undertake the public relations work the organisation could benefit from. In this case, an external agency can contribute the missing skills and experience within the organisation, or provide the services that staff have no time to dedicate themselves to.

Our team has a broad range of experience of both agency and in-house work and we only employ people who are passionate about making a difference in the world. We translate our passion into energy and dedicate ourselves 100% to achieving your aims.

“PR was a new concept for us when we first met Amazon. They have shared their expertise with our team, and really made a difference to us.”

Martin Jones, Director, Advicenow



Photo credit: MakeBelieve Arts by Paul Doyle

Selecting a PR agency

There are hundreds of PR agencies in the UK and all are different, with different ways of working and different specialist areas.

Look for an agency which complements the aims of your organisation. Agencies will be happy to talk to you about their principles and how they work and share examples of previous campaigns. Ask for references from other clients, as this will give you an idea of what it's like to work with the team.

A good agency will be as interested in you as you are in them and should be flexible enough to get under the skin of your organisation. You are likely to spend a good deal of time working

together, so try to find individuals you feel you could build an open and honest relationship with and who will work with you to put your organisation's interests at the heart of everything they do.

It is important that your agency team displays the same passion for your cause that you do, so question their commitment to their principles. You may also want to check that a company, or the larger group of companies to which it belongs, doesn't have interests which conflict with your own.

And as your resources are important, you need to know exactly what you will get for your money. Make sure any agency you employ emphasises complete transparency and accountability where budgets are concerned.

We are passionate about the importance of not-for-profit and public sector communications and are committed to working responsibly and transparently with clients. We are completely independent and only work for clients that have a positive social impact. We are proud that our clients see us as trusted partners.



Photo credit: Adrian Brooks

Hiring a PR agency

If you are thinking about working with an agency, you'll need to develop a brief outlining:

- **What you want to achieve**
- **Who you want to communicate with**
- **Your priority messages and ideas**
- **Any relevant background**
- **Your budget**

For best results, the briefing process should include face to face discussion as well as a written brief.

If you haven't already decided which agency you would like to work with, you may want to put your brief to a number of agencies to see whose ideas fit most closely with your own.

The first step might be to invite agencies to send you a written proposal. Once you have considered these, you might invite the best agencies to pitch, or present, their ideas and engage in open discussion about how they might work for you. Remember, the more information you share, the more accurately the results will reflect your purposes.

For more detailed information about the process of briefing an agency see
📖 *The Amazon guide to writing a PR brief.*

“We gained a great deal from working with Amazon. They are very flexible and I would be happy to recommend them.”

Trudy Kilcullen, Chief Operations Officer, Jack Petchey Foundation



Photo credit: Riverside Community Health Project by Jim McAdam

Making contact

If you decide to invite agencies to pitch, you will need to:

- **Make contact with a manageable number of agencies** which you think complement your aims to see whether they'd be interested in pitching.
- **Produce a comprehensive brief** and be prepared to answer questions on it while the agencies work on their proposals.
- Make sure you **give plenty of notice** so that agencies can research and develop a proposal outlining the best possible ideas for you.
- **Make it clear what you expect from an agency** at each stage. Do you want them to meet certain criteria? Or restrict their proposal to a certain length? Are you expecting a presentation? Do you want to see a written response before you shortlist the agencies you'll meet?

- When you meet agencies **make sure they are all given an equal chance** – so pay attention to how much time they are given and who is on your panel.
- **Schedule in time for questions** and discussion with each agency you meet.
- **Look for ideas, ability and a team you can work with**, rather than seeing proposals as a definitive project plan. A pitch is a presentation of what an agency might do for you, not a rigid manifesto. If an agency has the experience, flexibility and temperament to work with you effectively, plans can be finalised between you.
- Be prepared to **feed back to agencies** after the process. They are likely to have invested a good deal of time into pitching and will appreciate knowing how you reached your final decision.

We are always straight with clients from the outset, clear on what we can do and what we can't do. Avoid agencies that over-promise during the pitch process!



Photo credit: Street FM, East Herts YMCA by Paul Doyle

The contract

A contract with a PR agency can be adapted to cover any length of time so you needn't be tied in for long periods. It is often best to work on a project basis, rather than agree a long-term retainer. And build in regular evaluation and review points.

If you have a procurement or legal department, they will want a hand in drawing up the contract. Otherwise, discuss the options with your agency – they will be happy to talk through the detail of their standard contract with you.

We hope you found this guide useful. If so, you might want to look at our other guides:

[!\[\]\(83f22ed94ec5517769dd76d702c6bfd8_img.jpg\) *The Amazon guide to writing a PR brief*](#) and [!\[\]\(58518edde73d42d67a35a8ed26134c7b_img.jpg\) *The Amazon guide to working with a PR Agency.*](#)

“What’s always struck me about Amazon is their commitment and energy. Their belief in what they do has always inspired me, but what’s refreshing is that this is thoroughly grounded in a true understanding of the sectors they operate in.”

Simon Counsell, Director, Rainforest Foundation UK

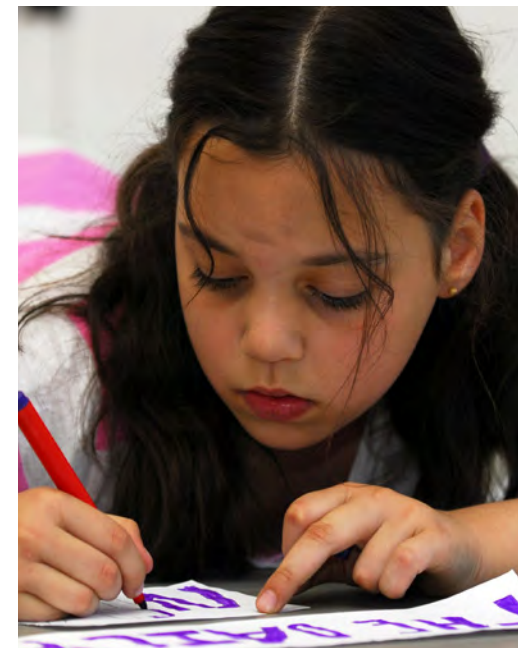


Photo credit: MakeBelieve Arts by Paul Doyle

Amazon

refreshingly real PR

Amazon is a public relations and communications agency working with clients in the public and voluntary sectors, and social enterprises. We create and deliver communications campaigns that raise awareness, transform the way people think and help to deliver real change.

We'd love to hear from you...

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