



## Terracom Tips

### **Working With a PR Consultant**

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Making a commitment to heighten your organization's visibility by retaining a PR consultant is an exciting step in your organization's growth. Here are some tips to help make the most of your investment in an ongoing PR effort.

#### **Expect to invest your time.**

It is natural to assume that once you have retained a PR consultant, PR will take care of itself. However, any PR and communications effort requires that you provide information to your consultant - background on your organization and issues, descriptions of projects and programs, technical details about your work and more. This will mean that you or a knowledgeable person on your staff will need to take time with your consultant, often more so at first. Investing your time will maximize your consultant's effectiveness in advancing the goals of your organization.

#### **Bring your PR consultant into a project as early as possible.**

Just as members of your staff bring unique perspectives to the operation of your organization, so does a PR professional. Because of this, it is most effective to bring your consultant into a project at its earliest stages. His input can shape the project in a PR- and marketing-friendly way that might otherwise be overlooked. If you wait until a project is fully developed, you might inadvertently limit the effectiveness of the project from a PR standpoint.

#### **Give your consultant the big picture whenever possible.**

Share work plans, strategic plans and other big-picture efforts with your consultant. This will enable her to identify important PR opportunities well in advance and will help her allocate her time - relative to your budget - accordingly.

#### **Keep your PR professional in the loop.**

Whenever there are new developments in your organization, tell your PR professional. This includes activities that staff may view simply as the logical outcomes of their work. Similarly, sometimes staff members are so immersed in their work, they do not realize when a new development may have PR potential. Making a habit of keeping your consultant regularly apprised of activities prevents ideal PR opportunities from slipping through the cracks. Keeping communication channels open also means alerting your PR professional to potentially negative developments. The longer lead time he has in the event of a crisis, the more proactive and effective he can be in mitigating it.

#### **Let your PR professional be your media liaison.**

Your PR professional is an expert at working with the media. She knows what the media needs and how to present your organization in a way that can be most appealing to targeted reporters. Even if you have worked with your PR consultant for a while and feel confident dealing with reporters as a result, let her be your media liaison. She can maximize opportunities for coverage, lay the groundwork for future coverage, assess how a reporter is approaching a story and help prepare you to be most effective in an interview.