

Free eBook

PR Handbook For

FASHION DESIGNERS



How to Get your Brand in the Hands of Editors,
Fashion Bloggers & Celebrities.



Official Publication

“To work with influencers requires engagement and creativity from you. Once you find your influencers, you will need a plan to engage them.”

– Evy Wilkins

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Overview



What if Beyonce tweets about your brand? What if Bradley Cooper gets photographed wearing your t-shirt? Or may be Leandra Medine talking about your denim on her style blog? That's a lot of brand exposure that has the power to sky rocket your brand to fame and fortune.

But sadly, it seldom happens by chance. You can't keep waiting for that golden moment when one fine day your brand gets noticed by a celebrity, famous magazine editor or a famous style blogger. In real life, a lot of work, creativity and persistence goes into getting your products in the hands of influencers (editors, bloggers, celebs etc).

There are many fashion wannabes out there sending tons of free stuff to these influencers every day hoping to get a promotional favor in return. And here we are not even talking about the genuine fan mails and gifts who do not expect any promotional favors. That's a lot of noise to be dealt with.

Generally, many Fashion retailers like to leave it to the professionals – they hire Public Relation Firms, Consultants or Freelance professionals.

A typical PR agency charges anything from \$2000 to \$10,000 per month. That's a lot of money to spend on marketing especially when you are a small start-up because these PR agencies do not guarantee that they will get your brand featured on so-and-so magazine or for that matter, get your product tweeted by a celebrity. Some good PR agencies might eventually get you product featured on a famous platform but it can take months and months of time.

On the other hand, an experienced freelance PR consultant might charge you on an hourly basis of anything more than \$50 per man hour. Since PR is extremely time consuming, again it can be a very costly affair.

You can also hire a less experienced PR consultant or may be even an intern at a man hour rate of \$20 to \$40 per man hour. Again, since they're relatively inexperienced and do not possess those links in the industry that bigger PR consultants have, they just might as well eat your marketing budget with very little of fruitful result. However, this can prove a viable solution for small start-ups who operate on a tight marketing budget.

But what if you could save all that time and money and do it in-house? PR is no rocket science. You do not even need to own a degree in Mass Communication to do it.

In this article, we will tell you how to break through the noise and influence the influencers without hiring an external PR agency. We will tell you how Fashion start-ups can effectively execute and manage their brand's PR.

Influencing the Publishers



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1. Build media contacts

As a business owner, it's one of your responsibilities to build media contacts. You just cannot solely rely on a PR agency for this. If your PR agency builds a new contact, it's their contact. Start today and make a spreadsheet of influencers (publications, their editors, bloggers, celebrities etc) that are relevant to your brand.

2. Do your research before you contact them

Go through each publisher individually and get to know them. Know their style of writing, their interests, places they have been and follow them on twitter. This will help you in writing personalized pitches. Even the influencers will appreciate the fact that you know them and you are not one of those spammers sending default pitches for back links.

3. Make yourself relevant

Once you know whom your target influencers are, you must ensure that you and your brand are actually relevant to them. Find angles of your brand that would be relevant to each influencer you're about to pitch. Make sure you have something interesting to say to each one of them.

4. What's your story?

Story builds excitement. It connects you with the reader on an emotional and a personal level. If you do not have a story, all your pitches to these influencers will look like boring promotional letters. Think about what makes your products and brand so interesting. They want to hear your story – give them that.

5. Realistic expectations

Building Public Relations is a time consuming process. So do not expect to score a home run on your first attempt. It's exactly how it happens in sales. You meet prospects, pitch them and move to the next. You try to build a pipeline of leads by pitching to as many prospects as you can for months. After 3 months of pitching, you might get a call from the influencer you pitched 1 month after you started. It's all about wanting it badly and building a pipeline of leads.

6. There is a time lag in print

If you are pitching to an editor of a print magazine, remember that there will be a time lag. These publishers have an editorial calendar. Even if the editor has accepted your story, it still might take two months before your name is actually printed. So, don't be disheartened if you do not see your story in the magazine any sooner. This is how print works.

7. Pitch for print and web

Almost all print magazines have an online presence as well. Hence, while pitching to a print magazine, remember to request the editor to give you coverage on both the sources- the print magazine and their website.

8. Maintain a pitch report

Document your efforts and then review. Make a weekly, fortnightly or monthly pitch report and see which ones are working best for you and which ones are the most unresponsive. Look at all the people whom you have pitched and how did they respond. Get answers to questions like – Are we targeting the right influencers? How can we get their attention?

9. Do not look desperate

Excitement is good. Desperation is not. You might want to say everything in your first pitch to get a media coverage. Do not be desperate. Coverage is not given to strangers. So start by making an acquaintance first. Tell them about yourself and your story. Tell them what you particularly like about them. If done right, you will get a response and then you can take it from there. Make sure your voice sounds authentic and unique.

10. Online is better than print

A one-day old newspaper is junk and so is a few weeks old magazine. People read their current issues and throw them in the trash. No one likes to read old stuff time and again. But a mention on a website will be fresh for every new visitor it comes across and will continue to send you referral traffic and sales for a long time. Moreover, you get a huge SEO benefit when these media publications link to your website. So, the choice is very simple. Do not worry too much about getting a mention on print, focus more on online media publications.

11. Do not send generic pitches

Like we said already, these influencers receive tons and tons of emails and letters every day. Most of them look the same. Do not send generic pitches. Try to make it personalized. Make an extra effort to stand out from the noise. Send them a small pitch which tells your story in a few words. – Why is your story good for the editor's magazine? Why should a publicist recommend your dress to his/her client?

12. Do something unexpected

No one pays attention to the obvious. Sending them a t-shirt when you own a t-shirt business is obvious. Think hard about what you can send that can catch their attention. It has to be an amazing and extremely personalized gift that makes them smile.

13. If it's really good, put it on the Internet

If you're confident that you have done something really outstanding, make it hard for them to ignore it. Put it out on the internet and let everyone know what you have done for them.

Influencing the Celebrities



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14. Do not contact celebrities directly

All these celebrities have publicists who manage all their Public Relations. Do not try to bypass them, as celebrities pay them for this work. Moreover, it would be easier for you to contact their publicist.

15. Get a Pro Account on IMDB

Scouring the whole web to get your targeted publicists contact information can be both time consuming and futile. Save your time with an IMDB pro account. It's the easiest way to not only know your celebrity's publicists but also get their business phone number, email, address etc. It makes your job a lot easier as you can directly approach and ask them – How can you submit your product to their client? What's the procedure?

IMDB pro offers a free 14 day trial and then it is chargeable at \$15.95 a month or \$124.95 a year.

16. Do not send anything directly to someone's house

Influencers and their publicists would appreciate if you respect their privacy. If you do not, they will not appreciate you contacting them and thus it defeats the whole purpose of the gift. They have a business address and it's sufficiently accessible. Direct all your communication to their business address only.

17. Be patient and show respect

Show respect for celebrity assistants, publicists, managers and associates, and be patient. Do not try to push them with your rigorous follow-ups. Once it is confirmed that your product has been received, the ball is in their court. Allow them to get back to you. If your product is worthy enough for a response, they will. If they do not, it means you were not able to impress them; you didn't do a good job.

18. Do not stalk

You can call them once or twice just to get the confirmation whether they have received the packet or not. A good way to do that can also be to send your gift with a certified receipt so that you know who signed for it, and when. But abstain from calling time and again for one purpose or another. That's stalking!

As been told earlier if your product is worthy you will be responded.

19. Do not spam them

Good that with your ninja research skills you were able to find their personal email address, but always prefer emailing only to their business email. Worse thing you can do is emailing them on both their personal and business email address. If you want to make it even worse, you can send recurrent follow-ups on these emails. That's spamming, and it won't work.

Just send one email and a follow-up email to their business email. If they do not reply, it doesn't mean they did not receive your email. It's just, they are not interested.

20. Make an impact at the first point of contact

You can pretty much assume that your box will not make its way directly to the target influencers. It will go through a channel of publicists and associates and will be inspected at each touch point. So, if you are trying to promote a handbag, send them multiple pieces. Your objective should be to spread-out the product from the first point of contact to the last one.

21. Bespoke has higher chances of winning

To make an impact, you have to design the experience. Customize it to give a more personalized gift experience – it should be an amazing gift that makes them smile.

22. It's a gift – feel the joy

At the end of the day, it's only a gift. Feel the joy of giving. Many people will not even acknowledge the receipt, but that's fine. What's more important is that you are giving away things to build genuine relations. If you keep sending gifts, eventually you will build few connections to compensate for the ones who did not reply.

23. Do not make it a fan email

Do not make generic statements like "I Love you", "I am a big fan" etc, until you want to get lost in the noise. Everyone says that. You're not sending a fan mail. You mean business, right? Let your actions speak the words for you.

What you have sent, the effort you have put in it and the creativity involved will speak louder than words. Showing empathy, respect and admiration for their work will be more helpful in standing out and forging a great relationship.

24. Use high quality packaging

Presentation is everything. It shows how serious you're about building a new relationship. Risk using second hand material to wrap your gifts and you will ensure that no one even bothers to open your packet. The packaging of your gift speaks volumes about you – the sender. It's your first impression. Make it big. Your packet needs to stand out.

25. Do not forget to drop your business card in the box

Make sure you include a well designed business card in your gift box, with your name, brand name, logo, phone number and email. Sending a business card is a gesture which suggests that you are also looking for a business relation.

26. Do not shoot for the top

Go against the conventional wisdom. Forget top celebs, top social influencers, top Youtube channels, top bloggers, or anyone at the top. If you shoot for the top, you will have to deal with lots and lots of noise in order to grab the attention of the influencers. You have to be lucky to make it happen sooner rather than later. However, if you target the ones who are not at the top right now but still quite popular and have a decent following, it's much easier to grab their attention and start a relationship.

27. There is no guarantee

Face the truth. There is no guarantee. There is no certainty that your influencers would actually wear or promote what you presented them. But that should not stop or hinder your determination to put forward the best of your talents. A consistent good work often rewards sooner or later. But it does.

28. Celebs are great and Style bloggers are greater

Bloggers are the new celebrities and are much more approachable than celebrities. You can offer them your products, they will listen to you. If they like what you say, they will share your products with everyone through their blog and also tell their audience from where to buy your products. It means massive referral traffic to your website, huge brand exposure and most importantly instant sales.

Celebrities won't do that for you because that's endorsement and that involves their publicist, money and other things – way too complicated for small businesses. They will wear it but then you have to be lucky enough that they get photographed wearing your dress or tweet about you.

Conclusion



As a Fashion start-up, it's your responsibility to build links with influencers. It can give you unmatched brand exposure and may even show you few short-cuts. However, it takes a lot of innovation, hard work, management and persistence to make it happen. And admittedly it's expensive too as it requires a lot of time and energy to think about the ideas and to go through all the way. If you can't do all this then maybe you do not want it bad enough.

You will realize that it's a small investment when you look at it spread over time. So, do not worry about rejections. Just keep pitching influencers and eventually you will find someone who will like you and your work and will be happy to share your brand with their audience.

Good luck!