

February 2015

TOOL:TEMPLATE

002

# PR Brief

Briefing a public relations  
campaign.

Expert advice from Ava Lawler,  
managing director, Weber  
Shandwick Australia.





Published by *Marketing*.

**Content bearing this logo is premium content created for members of Marketing Advantage, the membership connecting marketers to premium resources, by Australia's premier marketing publication.**

**Visit  
[marketingmag.com.au/advantage](http://marketingmag.com.au/advantage)**

Compiled and edited  
by Belle Kwan

Many thanks to  
Ava Lawler at  
Weber Shandwick  
Australia for her expert  
guidance and advice.

Product code: MKTTT002

# Marketing

Publisher  
PAUL LIDGERWOOD

Editor  
PETER ROPER  
[peter.rop@niche.com.au](mailto:peter.rop@niche.com.au)

Assistant editor  
MICHELLE HERBISON  
[michelle.herbison@niche.com.au](mailto:michelle.herbison@niche.com.au)

Sub editor  
MADELEINE SWAIN

Art director  
KEELY ATKINS

Production manager  
SONIA SALERA  
[sonia.salera@niche.com.au](mailto:sonia.salera@niche.com.au)

Design & Digital pre-press  
MONIQUE BLAIR

Advertising enquiries  
Business development manager  
KENDALL CHADWICK  
Tel: +613 9948 4978  
[kendall.chadwick@niche.com.au](mailto:kendall.chadwick@niche.com.au)

Subscription enquiries  
Tel: 1800 804 160  
[subscriptions@niche.com.au](mailto:subscriptions@niche.com.au)  
**[www.marketingmag.com.au](http://www.marketingmag.com.au)**

*Marketing* is a publication of  
Niche Media Pty Ltd  
ABN 13 064 613 529.  
142 Dorcas Street,  
South Melbourne, VIC 3205  
Tel +613 9948 4900  
Fax +613 9948 4999



Chairman  
NICHOLAS DOWER

Managing director  
PAUL LIDGERWOOD

Commercial director  
JOANNE DAVIES

Content director  
CHRIS RENNIE

Financial controller  
SONIA JURISTA

Printing  
C&C PRINTING CO. LTD

Accounting software  
SAPPHIREONE  
[www.sapphireone.com](http://www.sapphireone.com)



**Marketing** ISSN 1441-7863 © 2015 Niche Media Pty Ltd. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, internet, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publishers. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication, the publishers accept no responsibility or liability for any errors, omissions or resultant consequences including any loss or damage arising from reliance on information in this publication. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily endorsed by the editor, publisher or Niche Media Pty Ltd.

**Niche Media Privacy Policy** This issue of Marketing may contain offers, competitions, surveys, subscription offers and premiums that, if you choose to participate, require you to provide information about yourself. If you provide information about yourself to NICHE MEDIA, NICHE MEDIA will use the information to provide you with the products or services you have requested (such as subscriptions). We may also provide this information to contractors who provide the products and services on our behalf (such as mail houses and suppliers of subscriber premiums and promotional prizes). We do not sell your information to third parties under any circumstances, however the suppliers of some of these products and services may retain the information we provide for future activities of their own, including direct marketing. NICHE MEDIA will also retain your information and use it to inform you of other NICHE MEDIA promotions and publications from time to time. If you would like to know what information NICHE MEDIA holds about you please contact The Privacy Officer, NICHE MEDIA PTY LTD, 142 Dorcas Street SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC 3205.

# Read this first

**This document was created for marketer to brief a public relations campaign to an agency, but with modifications is also a useful exercise for in-house teams when starting a new campaign or project. Weber Shandwick's Ava Lawler starts us off with some general advice.**

## Preparing for the PR brief

Ensure that the marketer(s) are connected to the executive team of the organisation, and that they've taken a brief from the board of directors, or the CEO, with concise understanding of the direction the organisation wants to move towards.

It is important to have a clear understanding around the business objectives, and a good understanding of how much involvement the C-suite would like to have within this brief.

Lines are blurring between various organisational departments and I feel it is really important the marketer has a strong idea of the organisation's strategy across all departments. For example, knowing the IT strategy could offer the possibility of leveraging the best technology within the campaign solution. Similarly, by knowing what is happening from the HR perspective, there is potential in embracing the full power of the employees to create a successful campaign.

## How is the PR brief unique to the IMC brief?

From an integrated marketing perspective, I think it is important that the marketer is putting together individual briefs based off a master brief. In terms of business objectives, audiences, messages and tone.

However, with a PR brief, a marketer needs to be more specific in areas such as community programs, CSR commitments and former engagement with influencers. External influences and influencers, as well as internal communications, needs to be considered in a PR brief too.

Other information that will be helpful from a PR perspective include information on company spokespeople, their level of preparedness, and how media trained they are in representing the organisation.

Evaluation is another area that will be unique to the PR brief. PR campaigns are measured very differently from an advertising campaign

Typically our recommendation to clients is that they not only provide us, the PR agency, with a written brief in advance to review, but that we also get the opportunity to ask questions to the client and for us to drill into the details.

## The briefing procedure

PR agencies certainly do not expect the client to readily have all the information to provide us with. One option is that the agency takes a verbal brief and fills in the brief with the initial set of information provided.

For example, at Weber Shandwick we often take a verbal brief from our existing client, and provide them with a briefing template in advance. This act as a guide to facilitate a face to face discussion to follow, but the template allows the client the preparation time to gather as much information as they can to provide the agency with.

In particular, crucial information to provide includes helping the agency understand and separate the new with the old – is there a new product? Is there a new audience the organisation is trying to reach? Does the client have a new competitive set?

It is a tragic mistake when either the client or the agency become complacent and rely just on existing knowledge. Both parties can run into the danger of becoming repetitive and dull. No organisation will achieve competitive success if all they do is rest on the laurels of previous campaigns.

## Understand the value of PR

I definitely feel that in the time of my career, I've seen a significant improvement in the knowledge and improvement of utilising public relation within the marketing mix.

I think that has come because the larger organisations, more often than not, have a PR professional within the organisation that has helped shaped that understanding, and help educate the organisation at large.

Marketers themselves have also been able to see the cost and benefit of PR campaigns, and realise the benefits of involving public relations earlier in the mix and making them a more integrated part of the program.

At the same time, this has led to an increase in the acceptance of seeking professional advice from PR agencies. Organisations have a better awareness of the potential for PR to protect and promote the organisation or a product.

### **1. Objectives**

---

What are your business objectives for this campaign/project?

**Ava Lawler:**

*Make sure you are asking this question of your business and make sure you have a good understanding about the business strategy. Can you readily identify the key objectives of the board of directors? If you don't do this right, the biggest risk is that you end up with a campaign that takes a false direction, and one that doesn't have business impact because it is not as finely honed into what the business is looking to achieve.*

## **2. Timelines**

What are the key timelines for this campaign/project?

### 3. Strategic focus

---

What is your strategic focus for this campaign/project?

What is truly differentiating about your brand and product/ service offering?

What are the focus areas for this campaign/ project? Provide an overview of priority products and/ or services you would like to highlight through communications.

#### **Ava Lawler:**

*Be sure to speak to your CEO, or other business leaders, to form the decision on what will be the strategic focus for this particular campaign or project.*

*When differentiating your brand and offering, it is very important to ensure all product or campaign claims can be substantiated. It is also very important to get as specific as possible around this differentiation, and ensure that what you are claiming is realistic.*

*Use the acronym DARE as a guideline. What makes your product or organisation truly:*

- *Distinct*
- *Authentic*
- *Relevant, and*
- *how will it really Engage.*

*Remember, in PR, as much as possible ensure there is distinction, and this distinction must be validated with authenticity.*

### 4. Challenges

---

Are there any challenges that must be considered or overcome for this campaign/project to meet its objectives? This could incorporate challenges such as media fatigue, policy changes, product issues, competitor activity, or other factors.

#### **Ava Lawler:**

*While your PR agency will understand that some information is confidential and commercially sensitive, providing as much financial information as possible (in regards to past performance or future growth objectives) would be very helpful. This information will help your PR agency understand the business drivers in your organisation. That's where we can see if the organisation has a cash cow product that's coming to the end of its life cycle, or if a technology or product is becoming redundant in a market place. Having some of those insights will help the agency understand how a new product may take over the expired product, or whether it can gain some market share from its predecessor.*

*While your PR agency will no doubt do its own research, and there's plenty of information to be gained from external resources, the agency won't necessarily have that in-depth understanding of the workings of the organisation. Internally an organisation might have had particular issues with media acceptance of their last product launch, or where there may have been some cynicism from bloggers, etcetera. Getting a sense of what were some of the challenges that had to be overcome previously will help ensure that the new campaign answers these issues as well. There is rarely a case of 'too much information' when it comes to briefing an agency. It is our job and we're pretty skilled at consuming vast amounts of information and deciding what's relevant. Sometimes you can come by some golden nuggets of insight in the most obscure places or in areas not expected to be.*

## **5. Target audience**

---

Who are your target audiences, in order of priority?

What are the profiles of these audiences (location, age, gender, behavioural traits, etc)?



## 7. Key messages

---

What are your key messages for this campaign/ project?

What is the single most important message for your audience groups to take away?

### **Ava Lawler:**

*Be aware that this can, and usually is, different from your overall marketing or branding strategy.*

*What is essential in making a PR campaign successful is a set of key messages that are fact based. There should be data points behind each message to prove each statement that we are looking to make. Ensure that there is some clearly identified data and statements, and that this data is easily communicated and accessible to the whole organisation so that every member of the organisation can help to substantiate the key business claims.*

*The key to communicating to the media (and the public) is that you don't use the marketing hyperbole. While this may be more common in the other areas of the marketing mix, it is important in PR that we use a much more editorial approach, where we're focused on facts and that we can back all statements up with good data.*

## **8. Tone**

---

What image and key values are to be communicated to the defined audiences? Use key emotive words to describe this.

### **Ava Lawler:**

*The tone of voice across all aspects of your organisation's marketing activity need to line up. At Weber Shandwick, we go through an exercise with our clients where they're given a sliding scale based on levels of formality in communication – a scale around the different emotions you want to be evoking.*

### 9. Reasons to believe

---

Provide reasons why your audience should believe in your product/ service and messaging. Here, consider superiority claims over rival products/ services along with proof points that your brand delivers on promises, as claimed.

#### **Ava Lawler:**

*This is where your PR agency can look at your reasons to believe and compare them to what is coming out in the media and what the journalists are reporting on in your market space.*

*PR agencies would usually also do their own interviews with target audiences or focus groups to get a sense of which of the points you have highlighted or differentiated are the most important to the target audience; or which ones do the media believe are the most newsworthy.*

*With this information, your agency will map it against the audience demand, but also map it against the topicalities of the day to find the sweet spot between what the organisation is trying to promote vs. what the audience is looking for vs. what is the hot news or the big trends of the moment.*

*If you and your agency can find the sweet spot where those three intersect, then you've struck gold from a PR point of view.*

## **10. Marketing activity**

---

What other marketing activity are you planning that may affect this campaign?  
Do you have any sponsorships existing or planned?

**Ava Lawler:**

*At Weber Shandwick, we find it highly useful to get the opportunity to meet with other agencies involved in a client's marketing activity.*

*With one of our current clients, we have a weekly meeting that involves all of the agencies, the marketing and internal marketing team and the PR manager where we go through the campaigns. We also have a monthly strategy meeting where everyone gets involved. It is so helpful in helping us create and hone the most effective PR campaign.*

*I think getting the agencies together and giving them an integrated brief, and then facilitating that partnership model is really important, and the client has to take the lead on that internally.*

*Certainly, frequency of that engagement is something that needs to be adapted based on the size of the program and the level of true cross practice.*

## **11. Partners and competitors**

---

Who do you consider to be your top three to five competitors?

Do you have any strategic partnerships that might impact on this program?

**Ava Lawler:**

*Leverage your existing partnerships (whether it's through resellers or sponsorship tie-ups) and understand what the different sales channels are, and who the strategic partners might be that you need to work with in order to get your product to market and help generate business impact.*

## **12. Corporate social responsibility**

---

Do you have any existing CSR or community programs that should be considered?

### **Ava Lawler:**

*CSR can be, and usually is, an important component to an organisation's PR image and message.*

*To combat the rising scepticism in corporate CSR amongst the public, I'd go back to the DARE model. Make sure the CSR program is in one instance genuinely distinct and different so that it is going to be of interest to consumers, but secondly, and more importantly, that it is the authenticity.*

*While all audiences are growing increasingly sceptical, they are also increasingly focus on goodwill and charitable behaviour.*

*In many instances, an organisation's 'license to operate', in the eyes of the public, is that you will be contributing to the community at large. There is a greater expectation from the audience that that will happen; also, hand in hand with that, there is a greater understanding of the reasons for organisations in doing so.*

*Therefore, audiences are more sceptical, and are able to be more perceptive to the true intent of the organisation and more critical about the reasons behind your CSR projects.*

*And that's where the authenticity is really important - you have to choose your partnerships to make sure they have a genuine match to business. And this comes down to it relevancy - making sure that that the CSR project or community tie up has been chosen carefully because it is relevant to your employees, to the industry in which you operate in, and to the community needs. People are becoming increasingly respectful of organisations that are actively involved in solving problems.*

### **13. Channels and influencers**

---

Which communications channels are priorities for this project? For example, broadcast, print or social media. Which external influencers (relevant to your brand) are more likely to impact on your audiences' perceptions and behaviours?

**Ava Lawler:**

*Do not forget to include social media channels. We have been speaking to clients about social media, about the digital channels, and about the importance of having their own communication channels (websites, social pages, etc) for at least six to eight years. While certain organisations have converted faster than others, certainly today, most organisations that we work with get it and understand the need for digital and social. Different types of brands will have different value that they'll extract from that engagement – much of it is dependant on whether the organisation is B2B or B2C, and therefore helping them identify the right channel mix to be used and why.*

*What we are seeing overall is a fundamental shift from paid media to owned and earned media, and because owned and earned media is the space that we play in the most, PR as a discipline has been benefitting from that transition, has been well poised to help clients understand and make the most of the economies of scale when going into that type of communication model.*

*While we're seeing an increased acceptance of social media, traditional media also comes hand in hand. The influential traditional media are becoming more influential on social media platforms, such as how Facebook tends to prioritise within your feed news channels over other brand channels. The effectiveness you gain with traditional media is that your message then also has the increased chance of appearing on the traditional media's own social media channels.*

*Traditional media are becoming much stronger at using these social channels to promote and sell. So getting a story in the Sydney Morning Herald means you'll get the opportunity to reach your audiences not only through the traditional print page, but also through social channels as well. You can look at this as an amplified impact of traditional influential media.*

## **14. Internal comms**

---

Does this campaign/ project have any plans or goals for internal communications?

Is there an employee challenge you would like to address through communications (eg. retention, morale, engagement)?

Which internal stakeholders will be important to involve and/ or win over through communications activities?

### **Ava Lawler:**

*Understand that your employees are your most important audience and communicators. Organisations can make the choice on whether they're going to leverage the power of their employees as activists for the organisation, or risk your employees becoming dissonant.*

*The power of the employee is stronger than ever now with the power of social media. They now have a voice like they've never had before. If an organisation has a strong and effective employee engagement program, they will be able to fully leverage the power of employee-activists, where employees will become vocal, and promote and support their organisation through their own channels. This has huge potential in amplifying the effects of an organisation's marketing program as employees have so much more credibility.*

*Similarly, today, any employee dissonance has a voice like never before, which makes it extremely important that your organisation has the right social media policy, training and procedures in place to provide itself that protection.*



## **15. Evaluation**

---

How will you judge if activity has been successful for this campaign/project?  
Here, please provide specific measurable metrics and KPIs that will evaluate impact and success.

**Ava Lawler:**

*I would recommend that a campaign's success evaluation be looked at with both qualitative and quantitative measurements.*

*Consider what has been the impact on your target audiences, and what has been the effectiveness in communicating those key messages. Has these messages are been articulated appropriately through all the right identified channels and influencers?*

## **16. Budget**

How much budget do you have available for this campaign/project?

### **Ava Lawler:**

*This information is crucial because a PR agency can do a campaign within \$20,000 or within \$200,000, but they'll look very different. Both executions can be effective but having a level of guidance around what the planned budget is will ensure your agency is not wasting your time by producing something that's unrealistic either because the program is not big enough or because its not small enough.*

# Premium content and tools for Australia's professional marketers.

Visit [marketingmag.com.au/advantage](https://marketingmag.com.au/advantage) to see more like this.

