

# VENTURES

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## Hiring a Public Relations Firm that Fits You



BY ROBERT UDOWITZ, RFP ASSOCIATES, LLC

**Small businesses need to understand that public relations (PR) is not a magic bullet. It relies on the quality of your product, what your customers say about you and even how your employees feel about working for your organization. However, combined with a commitment of time, budget and resources, a relationship with a PR firm can be long-lasting and mutually beneficial.**

Identifying a suitable PR firm for your organization can be challenging. Many factors should go into the selection of candidates to compete for your business, including the size of the firm and the budget you have available.

When looking for a firm, be clear on your expectations. Public relations is best suited to helping your organization communicate with its core audiences. There are many methods and tactics to achieve these goals, but the specific strategies and recommended approaches should come from a PR agency after you have outlined your requirements in a request for proposals (RFP). The RFP should include your organization's background, goals and budget. This will be the guidepost of your communications plan for the hired agency during the proposal process.

Focus on PR firms that have demonstrated experience in your industry. Be open to including agencies of various sizes, including small businesses that may be better suited to work with your company.

During the evaluation process, it's critical to establish a selection committee and to create a scorecard that considers all the elements of the RFP. The scorecard ensures that each firm is on equal ground and gets a fair opportunity to win your business.

As some of your candidates become finalists, give those firms time to prepare their final, face-to-face presentations. The interview process will help you assess the chemistry between the agency and your organization, perhaps the most important factor in deciding which firm should get your business. The result should produce a satisfying, long-term partnership. ■

*Robert Udowitz is principal at RFP Associates, LLC. For more information, visit [www.rfpassociates.net](http://www.rfpassociates.net).*