

# The Private Face of Public Relations

Simon Young looks at the changes  
in PR and asks the hard questions.

**Q: What are the best campaigns not done by your firm?**

*Tony Edmonds, director of Auckland-based Voyage Communications:* A few years ago the front page of the *Herald* reported one of the hydroelectric dams had severe cracks in it. It should've been in the news for weeks, but it was all over in 24 hours. I suggest excellent PR was behind that.

Really good campaigns often eliminate negative press coverage. And then clients say, "why am I paying you? Did we really need it or didn't we?"

*Malcolm Boyle, managing director, Porter Novelli:* The two-year campaign that has turned a suspected dangerous Algerian terrorist – Ahmed Zaoui – into a possible contender for a Nobel Peace Prize. It's a remarkable massaging of the public mind in the face of government secrecy. Cleverly constructed and very effective.

The nation of Greece, which snatched a gold medal for organisational achievement from the jaws of the catastrophe that threatened to overwhelm Athens 2004.

*Karyn Arkell, general manager, Consultus:* The Glassons campaign for breast cancer, which raised \$800,000. A really good integrated campaign based on a good idea that was well remembered through a number of media.

*Jenni Raynish, managing director, Raynish & Partners:* The blog campaign by an ex-*New York Times* staffer who wanted the resignation of the editor after the

Blair plagiarism story. The editor of the *New York Times* was saying, "I'm not going to resign", but through his blog, this ex-staffer effectively got so much energy behind him, so much attention and comment, that the guy just resigned.

A powerful example of someone reaching their objective and using new media to get a very big scalp.

*Jane Dodd, general manager, Network PR:* Air New Zealand's done a fantastic job with the *Lord of the Rings* promotion. They painted the plane, flew people around the countryside, and got a fantastic amount of publicity for what is a pretty commercial vehicle.

The Special K Triathlon for women is brilliant; I hear so many women talking about it. Lots of positive messages and it's actually resulting in action, which is the last bastion of PR – changing behaviour. *John McKenzie, Christchurch-based PR consultant and md of Enthuse:* Paul Holmes and his move to Prime TV. Prime couldn't have paid for the exposure and profile it got, most of it word of mouth. I'm sure there must have been some smart PR person pulling the right strings behind the scenes!

*Jeanette Tyrrell, director of Hamilton-based Verdict Communications:* The Norgate buyout of Wrightson has been really interesting to watch. It was always in your face, they kept up that momentum, maintained a strong leadership position. Their position was always quite dominant.

**Q: What makes a great PR person? Is it caught, taught or both?**

*Dodd:* It's not just about being good with people. Some of the best PR people actually like to sit in the background and make things happen. They don't want to be front and centre and they don't need to be.

It's about a willingness to learn and spot opportunities. You need a real open-mindedness to things going on around you. Almost visionary.

*Gabrielle Tourelle, general manager, Text100:* A curious mix of skill and natural talent. A strong action mode is required to keep making things happen, sometimes out of nothing but a brave idea.

A healthy curiosity about the world and people, communication skills, problem-solving skills and a commitment to delivering the results you promise. Above all I believe it's the ability to keep growing and learning that sets the true PR person apart.

Core skills of writing, PR planning and time management can be learned to a degree but the individual magic that each consultant can bring is the icing on the cake.

*John Bishop, professional speaker, writer and trainer:* Understand corporate and marketing strategy and be able to practise it at a reasonably high level.

You need some business skills, particularly customer service or account management. You need to understand business.

Be excellent in one or more commu-