Buying Modern PR
A quick guide for communications, marketing, and procurement leaders

Get more value from your PR agency.

The right PR agency helps your organization earn trust and make sound decisions under pressure. Get more from the partnership by agreeing on the objectives, the scope, and how you will work together.

1 Start with the business need

Be clear about what needs to change: customer confidence, understanding of a major change, readiness for a reputational threat, etc. Set priorities with your business, communications, and procurement leads before defining the agency's work.

2 Remember, expertise is the product

You're hiring an agency for its judgment, creativity, relationships, and experience—not just its ability to execute tasks. Evaluate the proposed team's capabilities and the strategic value they bring to your business.

3 Agree on what success looks like

Choose a few measures that fit the initiative and connect to your business goals. Establish a starting point and a review schedule. Be clear about what the agency can influence and what also depends on your organization or market conditions.

4 Make the commerical agreement clear

Define the scope, responsibilities, fees, and how changes will be handled. Discuss payment timing separately from the price of the work. Make sure the budget supports the people and resources needed to deliver.

5 Actively manage the relationship

Give the agency access to the information and decision-makers it needs. Provide timely approvals and candid feedback. Review progress together and adjust as priorities change. Your participation helps the agency deliver better results.

Ask how AI improves the work

- Where does AI save time or improve quality?
- How do those gains benefit me?
- Who remains responsible for judgment, accuracy, and protecting my information?

Questions? Kim Sample, President | kim@prcouncil.net

RFP Best Practices for Companies and Brands

A quick guide for communications, marketing, and procurement leaders

Run a better agency search.

A clear, focused request for proposal (RFP) saves your team time and helps you choose the right agency.

1 Align internally before you start

Confirm the business need, approved budget, decision-makers, and schedule. Agree on what success looks like and how agencies will be evaluated. Make sure your selection team can stay involved throughout.

2 Keep the shortlist focused

Research agencies with the experience and capabilities you need. As a guide, invite 4–5 agencies for an initial credentials review, then 2–3 finalists for full proposals and presentations.

3 Write a brief agencies can act on

Specify the problem, audience, desired results, scope, and budget or budget range. Include relevant background, submission requirements, evaluation criteria, and any non-negotiable terms, such as payment timing or location requirements.

4 Give agencies time and access

Allow at least 3–4 weeks for a full proposal. Offer individual Q&A sessions with decision-makers so agencies can ask candid questions. Honor your schedule and communicate changes promptly.

5 Make the pitch useful

Keep the same decision-makers involved and meet the proposed agency team. Reserve at least 30 minutes for Q&A. Ask how AI will be used and where senior judgment is essential. Score against agreed criteria; avoid adding substantial unpaid work after presentations.

6 Close the loop

Notify every finalist and offer specific, constructive feedback. A clear conclusion respects everyone's investment and preserves relationships.

Check your RFP before you send it

Use the PR Council's free Auditor to evaluate your RFP against our industry best practices.

Download the AI custom skill or ready-to-use prompt →

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Help customers find and understand your organization through AI.

When customers turn to AI for answers, will they find your organization, and will it be represented accurately? Communications and PR agencies help build the credible coverage, expert perspectives, and independent recognition that can influence what AI systems say about your company.

1 See what AI says about you

Test questions your customers might ask, including questions about their needs that don't name your company. Check whether you appear, whether the description is accurate, and which sources are cited.

2 Ensure your information is clear and up to date

Research agencies with the experience and capabilities you need. As a guide, invite 4–5 agencies for an initial credentials review, then 2–3 finalists for full proposals and presentations.

3 Build evidence beyond your website

Communications teams help earn credible coverage and recognition, establish expert voices, and share useful research. Alongside reviews and other independent sources, this gives people and AI systems evidence of your expertise.

4 Connect communications and technical expertise

Communications teams help build consistent information about your business. Web and search specialists help make it accessible. Ask your teams and partners how they will coordinate the work and address gaps together.

5 Track patterns and business relevance

Repeat a consistent set of questions across several AI platforms over time. Look for changes in accuracy, relevant mentions, and cited sources. Track referral traffic or qualified inquiries where measurable; a single answer or visibility score is not a reliable measure.

What to ask before you invest

- What gaps are there in how AI represents us?
- What work will address those gaps, and who will own it?
- How will we demonstrate progress over time?

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