



Asia-Pacific Centre  
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Excellence

**Franchise Faculty Series**  
**Michael Sherlock Transcript**  
**Unleashing the Power of PR in Your Franchise**

PR, in my view. If you put an ad in the paper saying that you've got a great product and all these sorts of things and endorsements, people always have a bit of skepticism about it whereas if you get a journalist to write a story about your product and talk about it in that way, that's far more valuable. Generally, it's thought that if you get some PR, which is a journalist with a news story talking about your product, your service, your brand, that's three to four times more valuable than the same amount of column centimeters, air time or what have you. So PR, most people don't understand PR because you've got to separate PR from advertising. PR is not advertising. If you go and talk to a journalist and you're trying to get free advertising, they'll switch off and you'll go nowhere. A journalist is only interested in talking to you if you've got a story, a newsworthy story. So you need to let go and not be worried about the outcome. A lot of people say, "Oh, if I say the wrong thing, what's going to happen?" In my view, very rarely that you'll get that bad publicity. But even then you're going to increase brand awareness. So with your PR you need to have a genuine story that is newsworthy, and it's easy to come up with things like that.

I'll give you an example we did at Brumby's where it went ballistic. So we decided to make the world's biggest lamington. So we had a PR company we engaged so we started making a lamington, so we needed to put it together so a big deal with making the world's biggest lamington. We may get a little bit here or a little bit there. So when do we make it? We thought, "We'll make it on Australia Day. Yeah, that'll work. Where will we make it? We'll make it at Federation Square in Melbourne on the same day." So it's Australia Day, everyone's got a holiday, lamingtons, hey, it's lining up. We're starting to get it together. So on Australia Day you had a one-day cricket match and you had Lleyton Hewitt playing at the tennis arena at Cairns. So we're almost there.

Now at the same time as we were doing it, we decided well, what are we going to do with the lamington? We just give it out to people? No, we'll raise money for a charity. So we got Care Australia involved. The tsunami had just happened previously so it was a gold coin donation. So we had all of the elements together. We made the lamington, we cut it up for gold coin donations, so every news channel around Australia – what do you think the main story's going to be? It's Australia Day, the biggest lamington down in Melbourne; money's been going to the tsunami because there were follow-up stories on the tsunami.

So you need to align all these things. You can't always align everything in that way, but it was just an idea we had with the lamington and if we would have executed it poorly, it would have flopped. But in this way . . . so we led every news story during the day when people were watching the tennis and the cricket on 7 and 9, there was always the news breaks, you know, what's coming up on the news tonight? So it was always the world's biggest lamington. So at the front of it, they couldn't shoot that with – because it didn't say Brumby's made the world's biggest lamington but at the front of it and all the people had Brumby's uniforms and all that. So

if you're doing . . . often you see people being interviewed on TV and talking, they've got a black T shirt on. Wear your brand. Get your brand big. Get a special PR shoot or photo opportunity shoot. Those coaches that are responsible for people with stuff on their collars – follow that example.

So that's just one idea of PR but from my point of view, you need to get a good PR agency. Meet them once a fortnight. Work up stories from your stores. There's always something going on out at your store or your service-orientated franchise. There's always something happening. Someone's won an award, it's a birthday, you've scooped the one millionth ice cream. You can make things, up, you know, to suit. And so you need to constantly have ideas coming out. And so when journalists ring you, you need to speak to them just like you talk to anyone else. If they ring, always return their call right away. Be friendly. Engage them. Talk to them. Understand what they're about and be user friendly, be easy to operate, and you'll get lots of continuous opportunities where they'll find you first rather than someone else when there's a story out there.

If something controversial happens . . . there was another instance where something controversial happened. We put an ad out, which went to a complaint to the Advertising Complaints Tribunal that said that a nun thought it was inappropriate that we were using a nun dressed in traditional nun's costume. And her complaint was that nuns nowadays don't dress like that. They dress differently and we were stereotyping a nun. And so she put a complaint in and we had to defend it. So we put our defense out.

Channel 9, A Current Affair, called. They wanted to do a story about this. So fine, we agreed right away, dropped everything, down to the store. They did hold an interview. They interviewed all sorts of people about . . . they did a vox pop in the main street of Brisbane, asked them what they thought about the ad, da-da-da, and did they find this offensive? Must have been a slow news day. The result was that we had three and a half minutes of every Current Affair program throughout the whole of Australia. When we measured the value of that, it was something like \$3.5 million worth. And they kept playing our ad, saying, "What do you think of the ad? Is this . . . " you know, whatever.

And the result was where some people were a bit offended by it, yes, they agreed with the nun, the nun was a lovely person. She bought Brumby's bread. She was apologetic; it was just her crusade. We gave her lots of vouchers and apologized. It wasn't practical to reshoot the ad in the way and I don't think Sister Act or all these sort of things would have worked as well if the nun hadn't worn a traditional costume.

So even that negative type of area, you can turn it. If you have a really negative thing that happens with your brand, the best thing – my advice is don't give it oxygen. Get out there, make a statement, defend your brand and then don't make a further story. Don't keep on supplying or giving more opportunity because the media will look for a story to grow and continue. So if you have a negative thing, go out there, defend it, say you worked on this, admit your defeat or whatever you've done. Apologize – set things right.

Especially these days with social media, if someone posts a negative item on your website if you try and take it and close it down, it's going to make things worse. Don't do that. Let your people that are advocates for your brand, your word of mouth, they'll get on there and they'll defend your brand. You don't need to try and orchestrate it. If you try and do that, you'll be found out.