

As a leader, talk is cheap. Action is what counts and practice makes a difference. Below are practical steps to improve performance.

- **The 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter is when to create your marketing plan for next year.** Just like each of the other critical functions in your business, it's important to plan for how you'll market and brand your business in the coming year, and the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter is the time to do it. As Amy Rosenberg said in the episode, don't overthink or overcomplicate it. Focus on what's going on for you and your audience, then how and when you want to communicate about those things. If you need help, check out Amy's blog post here, which gives more context and offers a simple grid to complete: <https://www.veracityagency.com/content-marketing/planning-your-content-marketing/>
- **After you've built your marketing plan, schedule a year's worth of monthly meetings in advance to keep you on track and help you execute it.** If you're not meeting rhythmically – at least once a month – to check in with your team on the marketing plan, your chances of fully executing it greatly diminish. And some would argue if you're not going to execute the plan, why bother wasting valuable time and money creating it in the first place? If you want to realize any ROI on your marketing plan, you need to come together to review your strategy, adjust it as needed, review drafts of future communications, and identify potential PR emergencies that you should begin to prepare for now.

**PRO TIP:** If your organization doesn't have its own PR or marketing team, you can still accomplish this by engaging others close to you, either inside or outside the business, to help you strategize and create a plan. Look for someone who's detail-oriented to assist in creating the plan, while someone more creative might be better suited to help shape and craft the messages you publish.

- **Do this to take your marketing to the next level.** Identify the top 3 audiences that align with your top 3 goals, then be specific in your marketing plan about how you'll communicate with and engage those audiences. It only makes sense to be intentional about who you tailor your messages and content to. Just don't overthink it. You likely already know who those audiences are. Go with your first instincts.
- **You can attain thought-leadership status.** According to Amy in episode 39, all it takes to become a recognized thought-leader in your space is taking everything out of your head and creating content with it. It's that simple. Start by creating content from what you already know. You don't have to know the most; just be willing to share what you do

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know. It's not only good for your company, but in time it will absolutely position you as a thought-leader in your space, all for just talking about what you know.

- **Let your Core Values guide your marketing and PR.** You have Core Values for a reason, and this is a great opportunity to show everyone they're not just words on the wall or in the handbook. Let them be the filter through which you create and review your messages, craft your responses, position your brand, and engage with your customers. Be sure to lean on your values especially hard when things become difficult like responding to hot-button issues or landmine topics. If your Core Values are considered in all these scenarios, your marketing and PR will be authentic and consistent.
- **Get out in front of any anticipated crisis.** Use your rhythmic marketing meetings to discuss what potential landmines or crises exist for you and the company any time in the future, and then create a crisis management plan for each. The time to prepare for a crisis is before it happens, not when you're in the middle of one when employees, customers or the media will be looking to you for a quick response. Identify the employee experts in your company who would be best positioned to respond to a given crisis, then have them prepare statements ahead of time for your marketing team to have and use, if needed. You can still work to prevent any crisis from happening, but by having your plan set, you're ready if it does.

**PRO TIP:** Make a list of everything you stress about, worry about, or that keeps you awake at night. This is the foundation of your PR plan (your proactive messaging to prevent a crisis) and your crisis management plan (what you'll do if it becomes a crisis). This not only gets everything out of your head so you can rest a little easier, but it conveys to your team what your biggest priorities are, from which they can create plans to address them.

- **Toot your own horn once in a while.** Congratulations! You or your company have won an award or been recognized for something positive and good! Now it's time to share the good news with the world. Don't be afraid to share news of the awards you've won, testimonials you've received, community involvement you're engaged in, or any other way you give back or have been recognized. You likely don't realize how often the good things you do go unannounced to your employees, customers, and the community at large, and each of those is a missed opportunity to highlight the good things you do.
  - **Your culture and purpose are interesting to the outside world.** If you're looking for more topics to use when creating content, don't forget to post about the purpose of your company and your vision for creating value in your industry, community, and world. Your culture and Core Values are also great topics that tell the world about you and can serve
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as your differentiator or competitive advantage when attracting new talent. Consider highlighting your own employees who exemplify the culture, Core Values, and company purpose. Let them tell your story in their own words. These are popular business topics today, so don't be afraid to create content around them.

- **Your clients and customers can also make for great content.** You've got great customers, people and businesses doing cool things. Use your marketing efforts to highlight them and tell their stories. Making others look good always reflects well on you, so when you're putting your marketing plan together, remember to include your customers in it.
- **Think twice before you respond.** In today's volatile social media landscape, there are potential pitfalls everywhere, even for those who are measured and careful in their marketing and PR. But those pitfalls grow exponentially for those whose communication is knee-jerk and reactive. Unfortunately for us all, the immediate access of platforms like Twitter and Instagram make it easy to find an outlet when we're angry or fired-up about something. But angry tweets are often the ones we regret most and the ones that do the most damage to our or our company's reputations.

None of us is immune to anger and strong emotion, but it's in those moments when restraint is your best weapon against destroying your own credibility. If you want to write the angry post, write it but don't send it until the emotion has flowed through you and you've had the opportunity to reconsider the message. The best advice we can give you is this: When in doubt, don't post it.

- **Be strategic and intentional about being in the press.** Some have said that any publicity is good publicity, but anyone whose navigated through a crisis knows some publicity can be painful and damaging. Therefore, be thoughtful and planful about when you want to be in the public eye and when you don't. You don't need to weigh in on everything or be always visible. Let your Core Values guide your thinking, and know when to say yes and when to say no to being in the press. The more intentional your strategy and aligned your team is around it, the more likely you are to control the messaging out there about you.

**PRO TIP:** Use this same approach when deciding which social media platforms you'll engage with. You can't do everything, so be strategic and thoughtful about where your customers are and what you can handle. Rather than do everything with moderate success, know when to say yes and when to say no to certain platforms, and then give it your all to be a strong presence on whichever you've chosen.

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- **Once again, it's not about you.** This is 2 episodes in a row where our guest – Amy this time, Jamie Dixon last time – has told us this. In episode 38, Jamie advised it's not about you when crafting your stories, meaning your stories must be about the audience if you want to relate to them before you challenge them to act. Here in episode 39, Amy's point is that 2022 is the age of employee-centric PR and marketing. The market wants to hear more from and about your people than from the CEO, so figure out how to highlight and leverage your best people – the experts in the trenches – in your PR and marketing efforts. Position them as the experts, not you.

To listen to this Episode again and tune in to episodes that you may have missed, go to <http://www.thefrustratedceo.com/>.