PR consultants should think twice before using Wikipedia to promote clients

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Punch is a boutique PR agency with the skill set and client base of a global agency.

Leicestershire, UK (rushPRnews) 03/31/10 — PR consultants are being advised to think twice before incorporating Wikipedia entries into campaign strategies after the site started cracking down on articles submitted by any public relations agency it considered to be using its resource to promote clients.

Leading digital PR agency Punch Communications has warned fellow PR professionals to think twice before preparing entries promoting clients and their businesses as an increasing number of consultants are finding their efforts immediately removed by the encyclopaedia site. The result is wasted time and resource, and disappointed clients.

Pete Goold, MD of Punch, said: “No matter how important a company might be within its industry, there are in reality very few that are deemed noteworthy enough to justify a reference on Wikipedia.

“Wikidpedia has laid down guidelines to prevent what it construes as an abuse of its resources, and states that to qualify for inclusion, the business must be the subject of multiple non-trivial works whose source is

independent of the company itself, listed on ranking indices of important companies produced by independent publications or used to calculate stock market indices.

“Wikipedia also has a very strict attitude towards conflict of interest, and no one can argue that if a PR company is being paid by a client to promote them, it is going to be difficult for that company to write an objective and neutral article that meets the site’s criteria. Using Wikipedia for advertising is against site policy and sure enough, as many companies dabbling in technology PR are finding, any entry that Wikipedia deems as reading like an advert or failing to adhere to the criteria above, will be deleted as fast as it was posted,” he said.

Pete added: “I can understand why PR companies take the route – some would argue that ‘noteworthy’ is a matter of opinion and that in the right circles, it will be of interest. Unfortunately, Wikipedia has the last word, and while it may seem like a quick hit at first, once post is deleted, the agency finds themselves having overpromised and under-delivered; something we all hate to do.

“Inevitably, the agency will be called to account as to why the article was removed, so it is undoubtedly the best option to be honest with the client about Wikipedia’s stance, and to wait for someone completely removed from the business to deem the business noteworthy enough to want to submit an article of their own accord.”

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