



How to manage a successful PR stunt

Publicity stunts have become more and more popular over the years and it is understandable why. When it goes well, a PR stunt can be a fun and unique way to raise awareness of your brand, generate hard-hitting press coverage and social media engagement. However when a PR stunt fails it can leave you out of pocket having wasted months of work strategising. When planning a PR stunt is it important to remember the success is dependent on four aspects: **the work behind the scenes, the delivery and public reaction, the news agenda and budget.**

The work behind the scenes:

A PR stunt is usually implemented within the public realm; therefore it is nearly impossible to do a 'run through' before without losing genuine public reaction. The strategy and implementation needs to be meticulously planned and it's important to be aware of the variables outside of your control which may interfere on the day and have a detrimental effect on the stunt, for example the temperamental British weather.

The delivery and public reaction:

For a publicity stunt to be successful it's important that it: **generates good public reaction, lends itself to strong visuals, and has the 'share-ability' factor.** It's difficult to guarantee these elements on the day, but if your PR stunt is taking place in a high footfall location, planned to be visually impactful, and you have photographers and videographers on hand to capture the magic, you will put yourself in good stead to getting the desired press coverage and social media engagement.

The news agenda and budget:

The news agenda is a key factor which can play a massive part in pushing your strategy off course. If another major news story dominates the agenda on the day of your stunt or that week, this will impact where you are able to place your own news story. It is important to be aware of this, and have a 'plan b' in place. You should also remember that a stunt can cost considerably more than you might expect, depending on the scale of the project, and what resources you already have access to.

This insights download has been written to help you decide whether or not a PR stunt is the right move for you and your brand, and should be used as a source of advice and insight, in advance of moving forward.

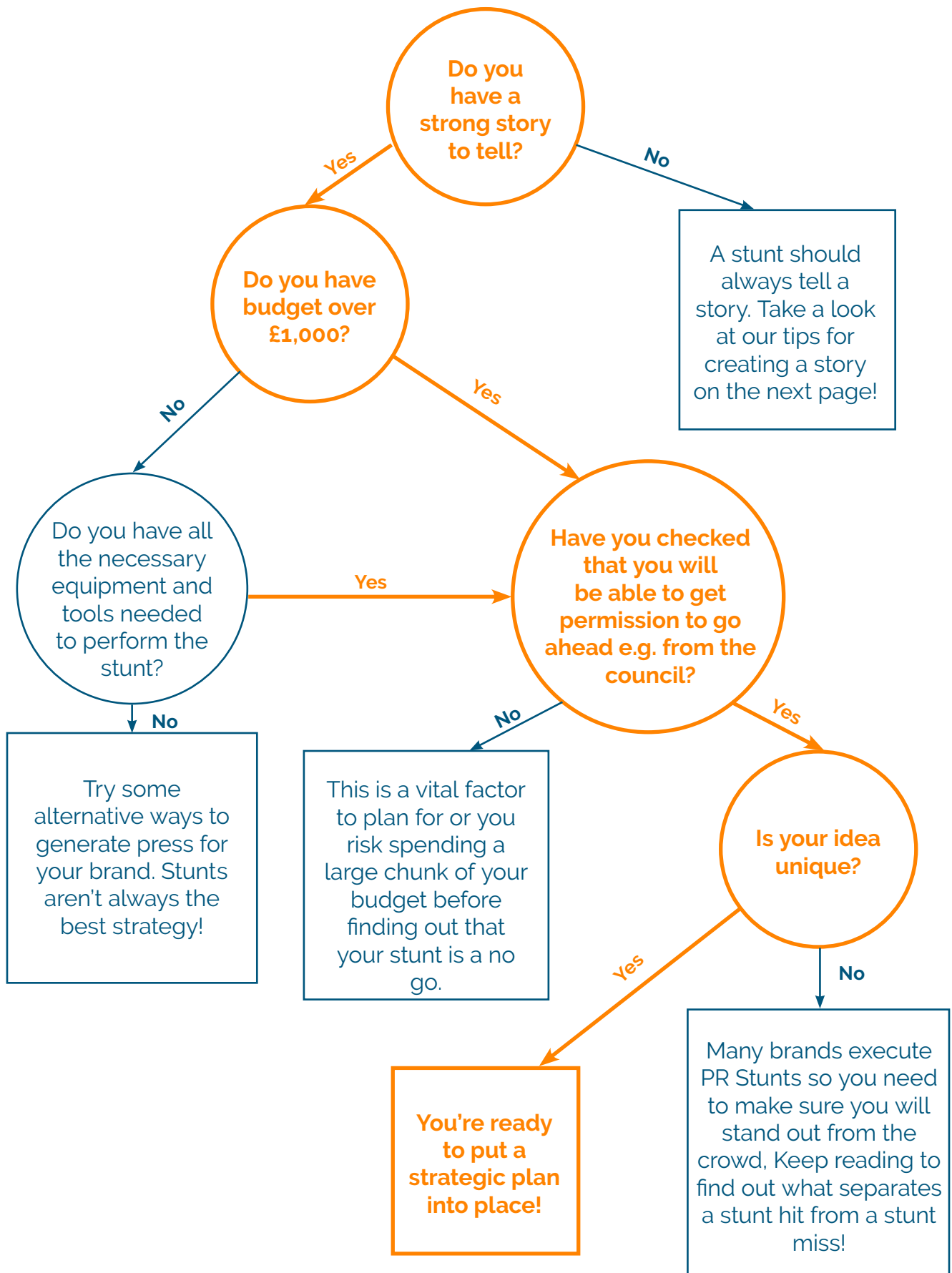


The Consumer & Lifestyle Team

We have wide-ranging experience of working with brands, charities and individuals within the consumer sector. We deliver effective PR campaigns for start-up and established brands and our wide-ranging media knowledge means that we return tangible benefits to our clients. We have expertise in: brand development, consumer launches, integrated campaigns, charity campaigns & product PR.

A snapshot of our clients have included: Disney, Ann Summers, LaplandUK, JML, SSAFA the Armed Forces charity, Jeans for Genes, Ideal World, Breville, Pretty Green, Nicky Clarke and many more.

Should you go ahead with a PR stunt?



PLANNING THE PR STUNT

Now you have decided you should go ahead with a PR stunt, it's time to start planning.

Below are eight key steps you should take in order to implement a PR stunt:



1) Think about the story that you are telling

When planning a PR stunt it is vital that you determine what the story is that you want to tell through this stunt. Do you have a new product launch you would like to promote? Is there some exciting news you would like to announce? It is important to establish the key messages from the outset and make sure they are weaved into the stunt to make it easier for the public and press to understand why it is taking place. Remember - if you don't have a news hook, press are unlikely to cover it.

2) Think about your target audience

As well as establishing your key messages, you also need to understand who your target audience is. Being clear on who you are talking to will help you to plan the key aspects of the stunt such as setup, location and timings.

3) Get the relevant permissions

If your stunt is going to be held in a public space then you will need to get permission from the relevant council authority. In addition to this, if you plan to use a public space such as an office building or a leisure centre, you will need permission

from the owners in order to go ahead. You will have to take their schedule into consideration when planning your stunt. Gaining the required permissions is crucial as if you fail to do so, the council or owners of the building could ask you to move on, and the stunt will be a no go.



4) Implement a detailed strategy

In order to get the stunt off the ground it's important to ensure you have a clear strategy which will detail exactly what will happen and when. A clear strategy will ensure you stick to your timeline, and it can provide a point of reference for all members of the team. It should be accurately planned and should include all actions you need to carry out such as 'research appropriate venues' and 'brief events team'. To ensure further structure, each action should have a deadline to ensure the team meets all deadlines.

5) Create a social strategy

As part of your strategy it is important to incorporate a social media plan into the campaign, which will be integrated into the stunt activity. As part of the strategy it is vital that you create a bespoke hashtag that can be used on the day, in order to encourage journalists and members of the public to interact with the brand; offering them the chance to share pictures, thoughts and feedback.

6) Planning the plan b

During the planning stage it is important to consider all variables that are outside of your control such as the weather or support staff logistics. If you are expecting glorious sunshine of the day of the stunt, what will happen if you are faced with a downpour of rain? Will it affect your imagery? Does it mean there will be less people about? Similarly, what will happen if events staff or employed freelancers such as the photographer, call in sick on the day? During the planning



"Advertising is saying you're good. PR is getting someone else to say you are good."

- Jean Louis Gassée

"Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some hire public relations officers."

- Daniel J. Boorstin



"If I was down to my last Dollar, I would spend it on Public Relations"

- Bill Gates

"The best answer to 'How do we make a viral video' is 'Shut-up'"

- Rob Flaherty (Ketchum CEO)



stage it's sensible to build contacts with a range of companies to ensure you have people to fall back on should someone else let you down. By thinking laterally and coming up with solutions from the outset, it will mean you're much more prepared on the day.

7) Brief relevant team members

In order to help events run smoothly, it is wise to designate specific team members with specific tasks so that everyone is aware of what their responsibility is in the lead-up to, on the day of and post event. Ensure each team member is clear on what the key messages involve, and what they will be trying to achieve.

8) Budget, Budget, Budget

When planning your budget for the stunt it is important to incorporate a sum of money that will cover 'unexpected costs' for things such as any unexpected permits, taxis, food and drink for staff on the day of the stunt. By ensuring you have some additional money to play with, will mean that any unexpected costs are covered from the outset.



ON THE DAY

When the big day arrives there are five things you should think about to ensure the day runs smoothly.

1) Check the news agenda

Familiarise yourself with exactly what is on the news agenda that morning and in the days leading up to the stunt. If there is a huge breaking news story, is it still worth you going ahead, are you limited to a time frame? This question should have been considered in the planning stages, so you should be prepared to make the call on whether to proceed should it arise.



2) Brief the team on location and in the office

It is vital that you brief all team members again to ensure everyone is clear what the news story is, where they are taking it and what the goals need to be. Not only will this ensure all team members are focused but it will instill motivation and team morale.

3) Get the images out

As soon as the stunt has been completed it is important the images are captioned with the credit you would like within the file name, and sent to the press team to distribute to a pre-made media list. The quicker the turn around on this the better this will ensure the stunt isn't classed as 'old news' by press.

4) Get feedback

Once the images have been sent out by the press office team, it is sensible to allow time for journalists to absorb what they have been sent. Then follow up with all press for feedback to find out if they are planning on featuring the images or video of the stunt. Gaining feedback is crucial, it will help you know what coverage to expect and where you need to push a little harder and will also help you understand why journalists are unable to feature it, which will help you plan future activities.

5) Monitor the social channels

Keep an eye on all social media channels so that you can keep track of how the public and journalists are interacting to your stunt and respond accordingly.

POST PR STUNT

Following the PR stunt it is important to de-brief the team so you can measure how successful the stunt was to help you determine what you would replicate or do differently if you were to do another stunt in the future. It is also a good idea to think about how you can utilise the material from the stunt to promote the brand moving forward, for example, can you enter an award, can the images created be weaved into your social media content plan, or on the homepage of your website?



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downloading this eBook

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Stunt Success

In January 2015 Sky Atlantic unleashed a life-sized polar bear on to the streets of London to promote its new Arctic crime drama 'Fortitude'. The fully animated polar bear was spotted roaming in tube stations and popular parks, and even took a stroll over Millennium Bridge.



Why was this stunt a success?

- **Quality over Quantity:** The key factor in the success of this stunt was the incredibly life-like robotic bear, created by a team of Hollywood special effects experts. Something of this quality would have required a large budget however scrimping on quality here would have been a disaster. The success of the stunt relied on creating the illusion that a polar bear was actually strolling the streets of London. A budget version would no doubt have caused derision – the public are hard to impress and the press even more so!
- **Location, location, location:** Releasing the bear into iconic London locations was powerful for two reasons. Firstly the official photography (see above) was incredibly impactful with London's landmarks providing the perfect backdrop

for the imagery. A great way to get journalists attention. It's easy to see why these images garnered widespread publicity in major publications! Secondly this meant that the stunt got in front of the public, impacting their normal daily routines and allowing for interaction. It was easy for those who encountered the bear to whip out their phones and post powerful imagery to social media, furthering the reach of the stunt and causing an online frenzy. Exactly the desired effect!

- Results: Coverage was generated across key titles including London Evening Standard, Sky News and City AM.
- 47 million impressions on twitter
- Fortitude averaged 722,000 viewers – nearly 20 times the normal ratings for that Sky Atlantic shot.

London Evening Standard

News



Mind the bear on the Arctic Circle line

Londoners get a shock as 8ft animated beast roams the city

Londoners

AN EIGHT-FOOT polar bear must be among the most unexpected sights to greet Londoners on the Tube in the morning.

But one little girl didn't seem particularly frightened when she came face to face with the beast at Charing Cross.

The bear – named, reportedly, by two passengers – was also spotted wandering across Hampstead Heath and holding up the fourth bank.

It is operated by Tim Wilson and Derek Arnold, who worked on

West End show War Horse. The pair spent hours establishing footage of polar bears before climbing inside the costume for the day's performance.

Mr Wilson – the brother of the bear – was the man behind the a portable camera in the rear. However, he admitted to the Standard that he was "nervous" about the first performance.

The animals' visit to London marks the launch

of the island's first theatre festival, starring Michael Gambon, Stephen Graham, Stanley Tucci and Christopher Eccleston. The 10-part series follows an Arctic expedition led by a scientist.

The bear, which will be around the South Bank today, was put together in eight weeks by a team of 100 animators based in London's Docklands.

Co-creator Bob Storer said they used over 100 square feet of fur and more than 600 pieces of material, including clay and latex. "It was a bit of a challenge, and a big job to do to see a lot of time," said Mr Storer. "The bear

people working at all times to try to complete it, even over Christmas. It is made of a semi-rigid foam as it had to be light – it only weighs about 25 to 30 kilograms – whereas a real polar bear weighs up to 1,000kg."

"The bear was difficult to see as we wanted the bear to look right, so each hair was put in place individually. Then we use airbrushed paint to make the bear look up-close. We are actually going to make the bear when it's gone. It sounds silly, but we have got quite a few orders for it."

standard

METRO

METRO Wednesday, January 28, 2015



Watch it, shorty An animatronic polar bear scares a small dog as it crosses the Millennium Bridge in London. The replica, built by 19 Hollywood prop specialists, was promoting Sky Atlantic's new drama Fortitude picture.

the guardian



Cold snap

An animatronic polar bear walks down a platform at Charing Cross station in London to mark the launch of Fortitude, a Sky Atlantic drama starring Stanley Tucci, Michael Gambon and Christopher Eccleston. Animators Hollywood prop specialists spent six weeks designing and building the animal. Photograph: Thomas P. [unreadable]

Stunt fail

When Sega launched new game Madworld, they scattered (fake) severed limbs clutching the game around key sites in London, and the company received a huge backlash from the public.



Why was this stunt unsuccessful?

- The severed limbs were so realistic that they were considered to be of very bad taste
- Whilst the stunt generated much attention for the game, the stunt also caused controversy which ultimately damaged Sega's brand image
- Despite offering samples of the game, the severed arms offered no interaction for Londoners
- The images were unpleasant to look at and therefore press were reluctant to report on the stunt
- No major news outlets reported on the stunt except for The Sun who slammed it calling the stunt 'sickening'.