

Choosing a PR & Crisis Firm

10 Essential Questions





FINDING THE RIGHT PR PARTNER

Your organization's reputation is one of its most valuable assets. Choosing the right PR and crisis communications firm can help you build credibility, secure media coverage, and protect your brand during crises. The wrong firm? It could cost you public trust, opportunities, influence, and potentially even revenue/funding.

As much as we'd love for you to hire us at Funk/Levis, we want to make sure you find the perfect PR partner for your organization. Here are 10 must-ask questions.

Crisis Readiness & Response



1

Can you describe your firm's experience managing complex crisis situations, particularly in our region? Provide specific examples.

Why It Matters: A strong PR firm should have real-world experience handling high-stakes crises—especially in your geographic and industry context.

What to Listen For:

- ✓ Case studies of crisis responses in your state, neighboring states, and general region
- ✓ Ability to navigate regional political, business, and community dynamics
- ✓ Successful damage control and reputation repair outcomes



2

What is your rapid response protocol in a crisis situation? How quickly can you mobilize a team and provide support, and what is your team's experience with rapid response?

Why It Matters: Speed and experience are critical when responding to a crisis.

What to Listen For:

- ✓ 24/7 availability and dedicated crisis response teams
- ✓ Clear escalation and decision-making procedures
- ✓ Past examples of real-time, high-pressure crisis response



3

How do you approach social media crisis management for clients, mitigate negative narratives, and protect and enhance client brands' reputations online?

Why It Matters: Social media can turn a small issue into a viral crisis in minutes.

What to Listen For:

- ✓ Real-time monitoring and early detection of emerging issues
- ✓ Response playbooks for different crisis scenarios
- ✓ Past experience handling high-profile online reputation challenges



What is your approach to reputation recovery after a crisis? How do you help organizations rebuild trust with stakeholders?

Why It Matters: Damage control is just the start—your firm should help repair and strengthen public perception long-term.

What to Listen For:

- ✓ A clear plan to rebuild trust with customers, employees, and the public
- ✓ Post-crisis media engagement and long-term PR strategies
- ✓ Tracking how public perception improves after a crisis

Media & Thought Leadership



How do you leverage your media relationships throughout our state and the region to shape narratives for your clients, both during crises and for proactive reputation building?

Why It Matters: Strong media connections can mean the difference between controlling your narrative or losing it, and secure positive media coverage.

What to Listen For:

- ✓ Established relationships with key local, regional, and national journalists
- ✓ Case studies of successful media placements in high-profile outlets
- ✓ Proactive storytelling, not just reactive damage control



Do you offer media training, and ongoing coaching, for our executives and spokespersons? What does that training look like?

Why It Matters: A well-prepared spokesperson can turn a crisis into an opportunity and ensure message clarity.

What to Listen For:

- ✓ Customized training for different media formats (TV, radio, print, digital)
- ✓ Ongoing coaching, not just a one-time training session
- ✓ On-camera coaching, crisis simulations, mock interviews, and real-world practice

Advocacy, Community & Political Influence



7

Our organization values community engagement. How do you integrate community outreach into your PR and crisis strategies?

Why It Matters: Public trust is shaped locally—a PR firm should understand stakeholder relationships

What to Listen For:

- ✓ Track record of managing public meetings, town halls, and community forums
- ✓ Experience working with local governments, advocacy groups, and grassroots movements
- ✓ Ability to balance corporate messaging with community interests



8

Can you provide examples of successful advocacy campaigns you've managed, particularly those involving policy influence, ballot measures, mobilizing public support for specific initiatives, or navigating complex political landscapes?

Why It Matters: Public relations often extends into public affairs, legislation, and issue advocacy.

What to Listen For:

- ✓ Experience shaping policy conversations and managing legislative PR campaigns
- ✓ Proven ability to mobilize public support through media and outreach
- ✓ Past success working with lawmakers, coalitions, and community stakeholders

Measurement & Long-Term Strategy



9

How do you measure the success of your PR and crisis management efforts? What metrics do you use to demonstrate the impact of your work

Why It Matters: You need more than just media impressions—success should be tied to reputation impact.

What to Listen For:

- ✓ Tracking whether public opinion is positive or negative and measuring how visible your organization is in the media and industry conversations
- ✓ Quantifiable reputation recovery (before vs. after data)
- ✓ Stakeholder feedback, engagement levels, and real business outcomes



10

What sets your firm apart from other PR/crisis agencies in the region? Why should we choose you as our strategic partner?

Why It Matters: This gives agencies the chance to articulate their unique value proposition—and avoid generic sales pitches.

What to Listen For:

- ✓ Established regional expertise in media, government, and advocacy
- ✓ Differentiators like hands-on leadership, boutique service, or deep industry specialization
- ✓ Unique strengths in media training, crisis execution, or public affairs strategy

Quick Agency Comparison Scorecard

Rate each agency **1-5** (1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent)

Criteria	Agency A	Agency B	Agency C
Crisis Expertise (Q1)			
Rapid Response (Q2)			
Social Media & Reputation Management (Q3)			
Reputation Recovery (Q4)			
Media Influence (Q5)			
Media Training (Q6)			
Community Engagement (Q7)			
Advocacy & Public Affairs (Q8)			
PR & Crisis Metrics (Q9)			
Differentiation & Fit (Q10)			
	/50	/50	/50

Red Flags to Watch For

- ✗ Vague crisis management experience with no real case studies
- ✗ Lack of regional expertise in media or politics
- ✗ Unwillingness to provide detailed answers to your questions or to clarify their processes.
- ✗ No proactive PR strategy—only reactive responses
- ✗ No clear measurement framework for reputation recovery
- ✗ Overloaded account managers—you want hands-on attention
- ✗ Inflexible contracts with long lock-in periods

Your Next Steps

- ✓ **Step 1:** Compare & Score Agencies – Use the matrix above to assess fit.
- ✓ **Step 2:** Request Client References – Verify past success stories and crisis outcomes.
- ✓ **Step 3:** Get a Proposal – Ask for scope, KPIs, and pricing transparency.
- ✓ **Step 4:** Set Clear Expectations – Define how success will be measured before signing.

Want to Explore if We're the Right Fit?

Choosing the right PR partner is **critical to your reputation**. At **Funk/Levis & Associates**, we help businesses like yours **build credibility, manage crises, and influence key stakeholders**.

FUNK/LEVIS & ASSOCIATES

📍 931 Oak St. Eugene, OR 97401

📞 (541) 485-1932

✉ info@funklevis.com



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