

# PRWeek

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### PR's ROI is the big winner of the 2009 awards season

The 2009 public relations awards season has come to a close. All of the events were resounding successes. However, the winners this season were not individual campaigns, marketers, or agencies, but rather the growing case for the high ROI of PR in any economic environment.

Nowhere was this more evident than at The Counselors Academy Spring Conference and the Media Relations Summit this month. Almost 700 industry leaders attended these events, sharing case studies about the ROI of PR. For example, Gary Getto of VMS' Integrated Media Intelligence Group, presented data from 14 proprietary studies at Counselors Academy. These studies established that:

- PR correlated to business outcomes;
- PR generally drives business outcomes slightly better than paid advertising;
- PR had a powerful positive impact on the effectiveness of – and increasing the ROI, of – advertising.

VMS's presentation, along with many other terrific ones, can be found at <http://www.counselorsacademy.org/2009SpringConference/handouts.html>.

Case studies from The Media Relations Summit also demonstrated the measurable business results of PR. This columnist moderated a panel discussion on this topic with Kelly Vanasse of P&G, Annie Howell of Discovery Communications, Gary Stockman of Porter Novelli, and Cos Mallozzi of Gibbs & Soell. Below are two of the case studies presented by the panelists:

■ In the height of the financial crisis, the FDIC, with assistance of Porter Novelli, created a campaign to reassure the public. The strategy included an online tool, Web-based content, and Suze Orman as a spokesperson. The results? In just nine months, the campaign reached an earned media audience of more than 312 million, and the donated media for the PSAs was worth more than \$20 million. There were also 8.4 million hits to the Web site.

■ Gillette's PR team took what they knew about men and their interest in technology to develop a multi-faceted PR campaign to promote its Fusion shaving system. The results? Market share for Fusion is up 3% to 4% in the past quarter, through the use of PR as a precursor to advertising.

These leading industry conferences have not been alone in making the compelling business case for PR. The Council of Public Relations Firms just published "Creating Value: Public Relations and the New Brand Strategy." This report is chock full of case studies about PR's power to build brands. It is a must read for communications professionals and the C-suite. It can be found on The Council's Web site ([www.prfirms.org](http://www.prfirms.org)) under Resources\Thought Leadership.

With this growing body of precedent, the PR industry is surely the big winner in the 2009 award season. ■

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