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Perspectives and Insights from Public Broadcasting Stations in Illinois

Corporate Responsibility: 'Get Caught Doing Something Good'

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At times it seems as though companies are under attack.

High profits, outsourcing, consolidation and the loss of local corporate identity are just a few of the items that make headlines.



"With all of the attention being paid to the negative, companies are looking for the positive," says

Kathleen Agosta, senior director of corporate and foundation affairs at Chicago Public Radio (WBEZ). "They want to be caught doing something good."

It's a "halo effect." When customers observe your non-commercial efforts in the community, they will see you in a more positive light.

For companies who have customers throughout the state of Illinois, it can be difficult to create a halo that's bright enough for all to see. Cleaning up trash along the highway, painting a house or sponsoring a race are important, but they don't have a statewide impact.

There is a simple alternative that allows a company to be active from Rockford to Carbondale with just one telephone call. The 19 radio and TV stations that comprise the Public Broadcasting Cooperative of Illinois offer a one-stop shopping approach to help companies fulfill corporate responsibility. By placing under-

A sponsor can gain access to the audience of premium public broadcasting programming across the state or regionally, just by contacting PBCI.

writing announcements on public radio and TV stations, a company can support an institution that's highly visible in its local community. What's more, the public broadcasting audience understands that without corporate support, such programs as "Antiques Road Show," "Nova" and "Car Talk" might never exist.

"They'll thank you for your support as they visit your Web site or walk in to one of your branch locations," says Agosta.

Underwriting vs. Advertising

An underwriting announcement is not as different from the advertising on commercial media as you might think. "Whether it's a university or a local bank, our sponsors are getting their marketing message across," says Dr. Jerold Gruebel, president of public television stations in Springfield, Quincy and Macomb.

Gruebel is also president of PBCI, which was formed to make it

easier for companies to meet their corporate responsibility goals across the state. "We created an attractive rate structure and flexible sponsorship packages," Gruebel says, "but above all, we've got a single point of contact for 19 different stations."

For under \$10,000, you could run a 15-second announcement daily for two full weeks on the 19 PBCI stations, reaching public radio and television audiences statewide.

PBCI's flexible support options are important to clients. "Companies doing business in only a portion of the state may choose to support only a regional group of our stations," says Jay Pearce, station manager of WILL in Urbana.

Via PBCI, it's easy for underwriters to follow the advice of a great philanthropist who knew more than a little about building businesses:

"Next to doing the right thing, the most important thing is to let people know you are doing the right thing" (John D. Rockefeller).