



Travel/Entertainment

Interviews

Interview with Katherine Rothman

Founder & President of KMR Communications, Inc.

www.kmrcommunications.com

by Rebecca Aubut



KMR Communications is the brainchild of Public Relations master, Katherine Rothman.

Drawing on her years of experience in the music industry and honing her PR skills under the tutelage of a Manhattan based PR Firm, where she held the title of Sr. VP and set into motion a tremendously creative and successful PR campaign for a client list that tripled within 18 months of her arrival at the firm, Katherine branched out to start her own PR firm in 1998. Within one year of KMR Communications' conception, it was named one of the top 50 Healthcare PR firms in the United States. It has continued to grow and it represents the gamut of specialized clients in beauty, health, lifestyle and more recently fashion. Even with a busy schedule, Katherine also devotes some of her time to charitable causes. She is also a member of the Marymount Manhattan College student/teacher advisory board, enabling her to serve as a campus advisor to students interested in careers in the communications field. The National Register has her named in their 2002-2004 editions of Who's Who list of executives and professionals. She also has a monthly column for 'Food N Mood,' entitled "Celebrity Bits and Bites" (www.nycfoodnmood.com).

In between product launches and organizing the next fundraising gala, Katherine took the time to answer a few questions. Ever so lovely to talk to, Katherine guided me through ins and outs of the PR business, how she got started, some of the big name clients she represents, and what's in store for the future of KMR Communications.

RA: Can you tell me about yourself and how you got started in the PR business?

KMR: I had always been interested in the music industry and that was my first passion career wise. I aspired to be the biggest female super agent to ever live. And after being in the music industry when I was in my early twenties, I realized that PR might be a more female friendly type of business. So of course, I took internships in public relations and I loved it. I've worked in entertainment public relations and eventually reached the point where I was virtually running somebody else's public relations firm prior to opening up KMR Communications seven years ago.

RA: What made you want to go out on your own, as opposed to working for someone else?

KMR: I just love the idea of being my own boss and really being able to take a company and shape and mold it the way I envisioned it; both in terms of how the staff was comprised and the whole tone of the company and the way we service our clients. Unless you do it by yourself and for yourself, you can never really create something that uniquely fits your vision.

RA: How did you start - by yourself or did you have a small staff?

KMR: When I began my business it was just me. I was fortunate to have a good name in the industry as well as networking skills that I quickly put to good use. Within a very short period of time I was able to hire staff and the business has continued to grow by leaps and bounds. I am pleased to say that we are now at 15 employees and our third office in order to accommodate expansion.

RA: For those of us who are unfamiliar with how PR works, could you just take us through the process of what you offer clients - from when they approach to product launches?

KMR: The first thing to realize is that PR is different from advertising in that advertising is a paid endorsement of a person, a product, or a service. Public Relations entails hiring publicists with connections in a specific industry to create a buzz in the media through editorial coverage. What we essentially do for our beauty, health, fitness or fashion clients is to create a buzz and name recognition for them using the credibility of editorial media coverage. Our clients elect to go the PR route because they typically feel that media coverage inspires more confidence than advertising. For some our clients, they may elect to advertise in select outlets and use the benefits of media coverage to bolster the effects of an ad campaign. Our services can include launch parties, strategic alliances, trade show support, editorial desk sides, and celebrity endorsements. Of course, we always say that the best reason to engage KMR is because of our knowledge of our niche of PR, our creativity, and relationships with the media which enable us to continually secure quality and consistent media coverage.

RA: You limit your business to companies, not celebrities? Usually when people hear PR, they immediately think of celebrities and Hollywood.

KMR: I think years ago, when somebody said 'I'm on the phone with my publicist,' one would automatically assume that the person was an actor or musician. Now everybody is using PR, from event planners to beauty & skin care companies, hair salons, day spas, physicians - just about any entity with a service or product can benefit from editorial coverage. And now the playing field has become a lot wider in terms of who uses public relations. Our country has more media outlets than ever before and we are seeing an increase in traffic on web-sites and web blogs. Consumers really look to the media for guidance on choosing gifts, services, hotels, medical care, just about everything we do in our daily lives. Years ago before arenas like skincare were so competitive, an individual could launch a product line and be confident that if the product was effective it would be a case of "if you build it they will come." Today, it really is a case of "promote or perish."

RA: Because it's such a competitive business, what do you think makes your company stand out above the rest?

KMR: We are very niche oriented. I always adhere to that old adage, "if you try to be a jack of all trades, you are a master of none." By staying true to areas like beauty, health, and fitness which are all very intertwined these days, we have been able to really refine and hone our skills and contacts in these areas in order to give our clients the best possible service. If a prospective client outside of these areas wishes to engage our services, I will refer them to a firm with more expertise in their respective area. I only want to engage clients when I know in my heart that the team at KMR is the most suited to meet their goals. I have a favorite quote from Sam Walton the founder of Walmart and that is, "There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else." I always remind my account executives of this and try to inspire everyone to go the extra mile.

RA: Congratulations on Fempreneur Magazine selecting you as one of its Top Thirty Female Entrepreneurs.

KMR: Thank you.

RA: How much of an honor was that distinction and do you feel, because you got recognized on that level, that you have found true success?

KMR: Not because of that, no. I am even more proud of the feedback that I receive on a daily basis from the people who work with me. If an intern leaves KMR at the end of their semester and tells me what a great experience it's been for them and how much they have grown and learned, that's actually even more rewarding for me because it's something that has more of a personal connection. When clients say, 'I'm grateful to your firm' and 'It's been such a pleasure working with all of you,' then I know that we have been pro-active and efficient. When we can see their success as a result of our efforts, that is the most rewarding part.

RA: So what are some of the up-and-coming companies or products we should know about?

KMR: We just signed on a company called Tanline™ (www.tanline.us.com). They are an Australian company with a line of amazing tanning products - as they say 'For the Sexiest Tan Ever.' They already sell to hundreds of countries in Europe but the product is new to the US market. We just launched another United States introduction of a company called 'Environ' (www.environ.ca.za). Environ is a line of technologically advanced skincare products. This is not fluff fun skincare, this is really serious skincare for people who are really serious about their skin. Environ's founder, Dr. Des Fernandes, was the first person in the world to introduce vitamin A in high effective doses. We also launched 'Skin Spa Therapies' (www.skinspatherapies.com) and they have a new consumer product to combat Cellulite called Cellu-ice. The product has a patent pending topical delivery system which allows it to penetrate the skin almost instantly.

RA: Did you initially limit yourselves to the United States and are now branching to more global clients?

KMR: Yes, we work with companies out of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom; really anywhere in the world. Many of these companies seek the services of KMR because they may be quite established outside of the United States. Now they are seeking a presence here and want to be sure that they have a firm with the talent to take an unknown entity and really catapult them. In addition to working with emerging companies, we also represent very established companies who use public relations to perpetuate their good name and make sure that their image stays fresh.

RA: What's in store for the future of KMR? Will you stay in New York or perhaps branch out?

KMR: We will definitely always be in New York. I'm a real die-hard New Yorker. Although I would not negate the possibility of a Miami satellite office at some point. Our most recent development is the addition of fashion and accessories accounts to our roster. We just launched new a shoe atelier on Madison Avenue in New York called 'Tupli' (www.tupli.com). Tupli designs custom couture shoes for women. Their motto is. "For women like you, when even Manolo's just won't do." The store is developing quite a celebrity clientele. Recently, Bettina Zilkha author of "Ultimate Style: The Best of the Best Dressed List" came to the Tupli designers for her own couture summer sandals.

RA: What else do you promote through your business? Can you also tell me of some of the charities you are involved in?

KMR: I do a good deal of pro-bono work. Most recently the two charities I have really been involved in are 'The Little Babyface Foundation' (www.littlebabyface.org), which benefits

children born with birth defects and provides surgery for them. The last event that we did a few months ago was attended by former Mayor Giuliani and his wife Judi.

RA: So these are fundraising events?

KMR: Yes. What I'll do is donate my firm's time and my time to provide some pro-bono press coverage and try to get celebrity support and gift bag donations for these events. Coming up, I'll be doing some pro-bono work for 'Operation Smile' (www.operationssmile.org), which provides medical help for children who need reconstructive surgery. The upcoming event has the support of committee members such as *Donald Trump Jr*, *Jamie-Lynn DiScala from the Sopranos*, *Access Hollywood's Billy Bush*, *supermodel Molly Simms* and *Amanda Hearst*. It will feature a live runway show with some of the nation's top designers. Many of our clients are donating items for the gift bags and Tupli designer's will be providing shoes for some of the designers. This event will be taking place on May 19th.

Here are some more companies that KMR Communications represents:

www.gmcollin.com

www.udefineu.com

www.thelipclinic.com

www.fluffshop.com

www.keune.com

www.robertcraig.com

www.tigerseyeskincare.com

www.lasercomb.net

Five Star Reviews would like to welcome Katherine as one of our new columnists, where she will be answering letters and dispensing her considerable knowledge to our readers who are looking for career advice. Look for her column coming soon!

Visit KMR Communications online at www.KMRpr.com