

A Guide to Finding and Selecting Public Relations and Communications Resources



About CommunicationsMatch

“A powerful search tool to find people with the expertise to support the growth of any business.”

RON MASTROGIOVANNI
Founder and CEO
HealthView Services

“CommunicationsMatch is an innovative new channel and resource that will broaden my marketing reach with potential clients.”

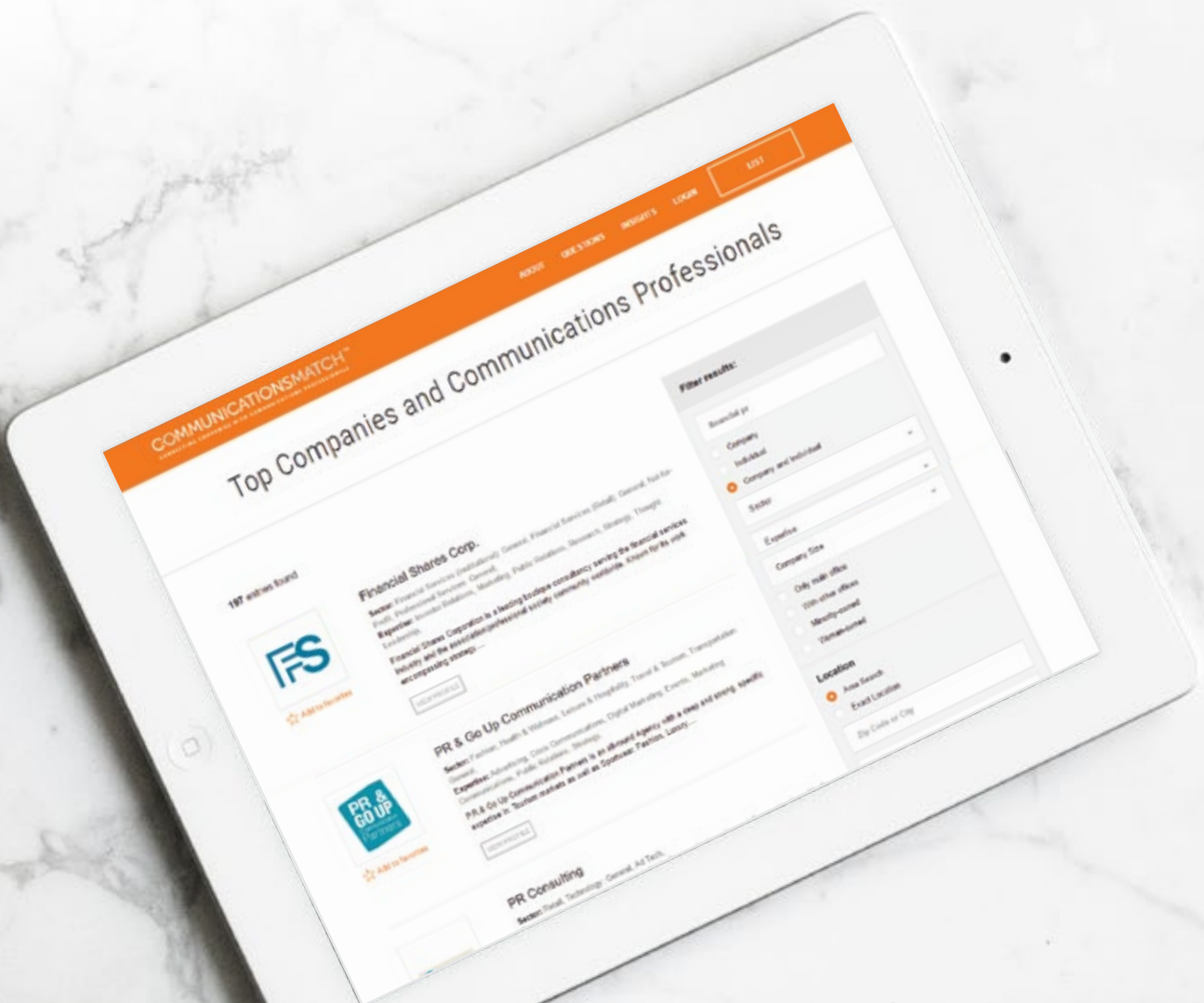
DUNCAN KING
Founder and CEO
Duncan King Communications

Finding the best PR, Government Affairs, Content Marketing, SEO or Internal Communications firm around the world just got a whole lot easier with CommunicationsMatch’s unique matching search engine. In a few seconds, corporate communications, marketing or business leaders can identify leading agencies and professionals with industry and communications expertise that match their needs, as well as refine a search by location and company size.

CommunicationsMatch empowers users to quickly develop highly focused lists of companies and professionals that can help them promote and protect their brand.

Type Financial PR into Google and you will get 131 million results – 99.99% of which will be irrelevant. A search on CommunicationsMatch will quickly deliver a short-list of the firms that meet your specific needs.

CommunicationsMatch makes a process that would otherwise be reliant on word-of-mouth and time-consuming, both efficient and targeted. It allows you to more quickly hire and onboard the right firm.



Introduction

Hiring a communications agency or consultant is a big decision and investment – given the resources and time involved. And, since the company is responsible for your reputation, having the right firm represent you is important.

Getting the hiring decision wrong or going through a process that takes too long or doesn't get you where you need to go is a luxury businesses cannot afford.

This short guide to hiring PR and other communications related firms outlines key steps to follow in this process:

- 1 Defining hiring and search criteria
 - 2 Identifying a short list of matching firms or professionals
 - 3 Selecting and interviewing firms and professionals
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1. Defining Agency Search & Hiring Criteria

All journeys start with a business need. If you are using CommunicationsMatch, we assume you are looking to hire a public relations agency, content marketing company, SEO specialist, corporate photographer or another communications consultant that will help you promote and protect your brand.

Industry Sector Experience

In CommunicationsMatch there are around 180 sectors and sub-sectors of industries, so finding the right firm for your business can be as focused as possible. Industry experience is critical for public relations because most industries have well-defined groups of reporters and trade publications covering them. Firms or consultants with relationships with these journalists and a knowledge of your industry– will likely be best positioned to advise on and execute strategies in short order. For other capabilities – SEO, media training or digital advertising – specific industry expertise will be valuable, but may not be essential.

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Communications Expertise

There are more than 70 specific areas of communications expertise listed on CommunicationsMatch including media analytics, content creation, email marketing, media relations, executive training, and website development. Different firms and consultants may have expertise in one or more areas. CommunicationsMatch allows searchers to find firms with multiple communications skill-sets and capabilities, as well as consultants with expertise in one defined area. Each agency gets to list their areas of focus, making it easier for them to be found.

Location

When choosing a communications firm or consultant, location may or may not matter. It's typically dependent upon the type of business and project. For smaller companies, having a nearby agency is important, because despite the benefits of being able to communicate by video conferencing, in person meetings are invaluable. The cost of having an agency travel may well be prohibitive. Location is also important if the project you are hiring for is in another city. To generate the best media coverage from the launch of a new office in San Diego, for example, hiring a local firm with relationships with local media will likely deliver the best results. Similarly, for international projects, in-country agencies are a necessity. That said, if you're looking for a more technical specialist such as an SEO consultant, location may be less important. On CommunicationsMatch we allow companies to search by country, city or within a certain distance of a specific zip code.

Company Size

Size matters when it comes to communications firms for a number of reasons. Larger agencies offer an extensive range of capabilities across various industries and areas of communications expertise. Large agencies may also require retainers and project fees that are out of reach for smaller firms. Mid-sized and smaller communications firms tend to have greater flexibility around budgets but may not offer the same breadth of services or industry experience. Boutiques and consultants, with specific areas of expertise may be a great solution for small or start-up businesses, as well as larger companies that have a need for an expert. CommunicationsMatch gives companies the ability to search for firms by size for this reason.

Other Search Categories

In addition to these core search criteria, CommunicationsMatch has been designed to help companies search for firms by clients, keywords and ownership. Using our platform, companies can search by diverse ownership, as well as for those companies that are women-owned.

2. Identifying a Short List of Matching Communications Firms or Professionals

With thousands of firms and professionals listed, a simple search for firms with PR expertise will produce a lot of results, so it is a good idea to utilize all search criteria to develop a short list of firms that match your specific needs.



Once a list has been generated, our detailed company profiles provide the information needed to decide which firms you want to engage with. Each profile has links to the agency's or communicator's website for more information and contact details.

3. Selecting and interviewing firms and professionals

Once you have the short list of firms – it's important to reach out and ask for the following:

- 1) A customized capabilities presentation focused around your business
- 2) Examples of recent work or case studies
- 3) Information about the firms' fee/retainer model
- 4) Potential conflicts i.e. Does the agency work for a direct competitor?
- 5) References

The responsiveness of the agency, interest in working with you, relevance of the case studies, and quality of the materials, will likely provide more than enough information to take the conversation forward or not.

When interviewing the final agency candidates, developing a grid that allows comparison and rating of capabilities can be useful. In addition, one of the most critical components of an agency engagement is the quality of the relationship with the people who will be working on your account. Interpersonal relationships are critical to account success, so taking the time to meet the agency in person and knowing your team is incredibly important.

Conclusion

Hiring a communications firm with the strongest combination of expertise, commitment and fit with your business and team will generate the greatest ROI for your business.

Having a good list of firms to engage with, and a well-defined process for selecting a communications partner with the right fit, gives the greatest chance of engaging the firm most likely to achieve your goals.

CommunicationsMatch offers the most direct path to finding the best firms to meet your specific needs.

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