

Newsweek

What Does a Publicist Really Do?

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Howard Bragman is a Hollywood publicist whose clients include Isaiah Washington and Ed McMahon. He spoke to Ramin Setoodeh.

What is a publicist?

A liaison between a high-profile person and the media.

Who was the first publicist?

Do you know how far publicity goes back? The Bible. God said, "Here are the Ten Commandments." Moses said, "I'm not that articulate." God said, "Your brother Aaron is. He'll tell everyone and we'll be cool."

Who was the next publicist after that?

Edward Bernays is known as the father of public relations. He was Sigmund Freud's nephew.

Is the idea of crisis publicity new?

It's not new, but the intensity is greater. We live in a world where the wall between public and private has come down.

Is there a rule for commenting?

It depends on the nature of the crisis. Some will be over in a day, like this week's Don Imus problem.

What's the biggest crisis of the year?

Does the presidency count?

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