



Paul Blanchard

EDITORS' NOTE Paul Blanchard is the founder and CEO of Right Angles, a reputation management consultancy with offices in London, New York, and Los Angeles, specializing in reputation repair across a multitude of sectors including politics, energy, tech, and music. Blanchard's book, *Fast PR*, is an Amazon bestseller, and his weekly podcast is one of the most listened to media interviews with the biggest names in the industry.

COMPANY BRIEF Right Angles (right-angles.global) is a global public relations and reputation management practice. It provides discreet, high-intensity strategic support for high-net-worth individuals, political and industry leaders, entrepreneurs, investors, philanthropists, charity heads, and family offices.

What was your vision in creating Right Angles?

It was based on a relatively untapped idea that organizations would benefit from having more visible leaders. The definition of leadership is evolving. Not only do chief executives have to know how to lead their businesses, but they also have to be the chief ambassadors.

It also seemed like a great commercial opportunity since this was something that traditional PR companies had overlooked. As an entrepreneur, I was excited to explore the commercial potential. While I wasn't sure how it would work, I knew I would figure it out as I went along. That was about 15 years ago.

We don't see ourselves as an agency. Many of our chief executive clients have other agencies that they retain, and I'm very conscious that we're not perceived as just another agency working with them. We don't have "accounts." We have clients. We work with people.

Making Leaders More Visible

An Interview with Paul Blanchard,
Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Right Angles

Is the Right Angles brand well-understood and how will you continue to build brand awareness?

We win on average between 15 to 20 clients a year. We are not a conveyor belt operation making lots of cold calls. If we win two clients in any one month, which would be rare, one of them will be a referral and the other will be somebody that we targeted ourselves.

How broad is the target market for Right Angles?

There are many agencies that specialize in specific industries, such as agricultural or pharmaceutical. Right Angles does the opposite of that. We work directly with the leader and apply our expertise in making the leader more visible. Thus, our clients would consider it to be a conflict of interest if we worked with another chief executive in the same industry.

Our expertise is not in any particular sector; it is in getting coverage for the leader of the business. We work in a number of sexy industries, but we also work for some not so sexy industries as well. We work with one of the largest quarrying companies in Europe and it's a multibillion-dollar operation.

Are your client engagements long-term relationships or are you also doing project-based work?

We don't do any project-based work. We work month-to-month with our clients, and we do a month's work for a month's pay. It's easy with us. We can say, try us out for a month and see whether you like us. I like the fact that we have to justify ourselves at the end of each month and ask our clients if we can carry on for another month.

Are metrics important to track impact and to show the Right Angles' value proposition?

We refuse all metrics and always have. I hate the framing of PR delivery in terms of time because if we get a client a major article in *The Wall Street Journal* because we know the editor, that might take an hour. If our client is excited about that, they're not buying one hour of my time. They're buying 20 years of experience for that one hour of my time. If it gets the client the outcome that they wanted, then I wouldn't want it to be framed in terms of time. The reality is that clients do not buy our time, they buy outcomes.

Did you always know that you had the entrepreneurial spirit and desire to build your own company?

I've never had a job. I started my computer business when I was 17 years old, sold it in my mid-20s, and then tried politics for ten years. When Tony Blair eventually stepped down, I knew that this is what I wanted to do. Luckily for me at the time, I put all my efforts and my heart into trying to become a member of the British Parliament. I was heartbroken when I didn't get in, but actually, it's the best thing that's ever happened to me, because it allowed me to do this.

Once I set my sights on doing this, I've been wanting to succeed at all costs. I think of myself as an ambitious missile, but once I'm pointing in the right direction, I am focused and hard-working. But I've got to be pointed in the right direction.

It's also an incredible niche. I think if you're going to do PR, what better person to do it for than the chief executive of the business.

Does the deep engagement that Right Angles has with its clients limit the number of clients that you can service?

Yes, and that's an agony of the business. The niche that we have carved for ourselves has incredible opportunities for us, but has incredible challenges as well. There's no shortage of demand for what we do. I don't want what I call "leaky bucket syndrome," where a PR firm wins seven new clients a month and then loses four of them. They may think that this is okay because overall they gained three clients, but it's just not how we operate.

Are you able to enjoy the process and appreciate what you have built?

It's an amazingly profound question, and you've hit the nail on the head. It is such a complicated answer. I am very ambitious, and I enjoy working with clients, but as an entrepreneur in a growing business, I am always directing my energies to what's not working in the business. Even though I enjoy what I do, I would say that about half of my actual day, every day, is fixing problems, either for a client or for my team.

So it can be quite stressful, but I'm determined to realize the opportunity. I'm dealing with people. I'm both externally facing our clients and also internally working to create an empowering culture where people can go about solving problems themselves. ●