

Mattel: Best practices in public relations

Mattel has been slowly repositioning its brand over the last few decades. Is it paying off?

By: Alexis Dubree

In its over 80 years and counting run, Mattel has never been a stranger to good PR strategies. One might even argue that the astounding success of the Barbie movie in 2023 was a result of years upon years of strategic positioning and branding that Mattel continues to build upon and evolve. The Public Relations Society of America [defines public relations](#) as “a strategic communications process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.” Today, let’s dive into just some of the ways Mattel uses public relations to develop relationships with its publics.

Barbie (2023) and Mattel’s media relations strategies



Figure 1 - Barbie (2023) director Greta Gerwig and producer and star Margot Robbie answer questions during the film's premiere. Source: Radio Times

There were many reasons the 2023 Barbie movie, featuring Mattel’s most iconic character herself, found success at the box office. However, much of it likely has to do with the publicity tour the film’s actors and directors went on leading up to its release. [Hawthorne Strategy points out](#) that Margot Robbie and Greta Gerwig’s positioning on the press tour reinforced themes of both the movie and the Mattel brand. Additionally, Barbie’s [widespread use of marketing](#) allowed them to reach multiple different audiences. Traditional marketing such as taking out spots on the Today Show reached different audience than its partnership with Xbox, ensuring that a large range of people became aware of the new Barbie movie.

Ynon Kriez: A face to the brand

Executive positioning is also something Mattel seems to truly excel at. The company’s CEO, Ynon Kriez, is an involved face of the Mattel brand, speaking to the media about current events that affect the company or giving quotes in the majority of press releases. In 2025, around the time the Trump administration began imposing trade tariffs, [Kriez spoke to the media about the issue](#), calling for an exemption on toys while also firmly stating how the new tariffs would be affecting prices. Kriez also frequently appears on broadcast news as well, such as the [interview he gave for Bloomberg](#) in early 2026 conveying how Mattel is handling the



current economy. Putting Kriez front and center makes Mattel look strong and credible as a brand.

Figure 2 - Mattel CEO Ynon Kriez poses for a New York Times feature story. Source: The New York Times.

The wonderful world of Mattel campaigns

With all of that being said, campaigning is Mattel's true bread and butter. Mattel's brand largely comes across as mission oriented; it positions itself as a company that cares deeply about its core audience, young girls. In 2021, Mattel launched its ["A Doll Can Help Change The World"](#) campaign, which was based entirely around new research that showed positive benefits of playing with dolls for children. It was a smart campaign that positioned Mattel's products as good for the development of children. More recently, Mattel has been running its ["The Dream Gap" project](#), a campaign which promotes Barbie dolls who represent different careers and role models for girls. What do these campaigns, and many more of Mattel's campaigns over the years, have in common? They promote social awareness and change for Mattel's target audience while subtly positioning itself as a main "solution."

Mattel has been working for decades to utilize public relations strategies to change the way the public perceives it. Barbie used to be a product that was often heavily criticised for creating unrealistic standards for girls who were not blonde, skinny or white. Over the years, Mattel has steadily used PR tactics to reposition itself as a toy that could reflect all girls around the world. The success of the 2023 Barbie movie proves that this repositioning is paying off.

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About the author

Alexis Dubree is a growing PR and social media professional in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex area. She will be graduating from the University of North Texas in May 2026 with a bachelor's degree in journalism with a concentration in public relations. Alexis hopes to one day pursue a career in analytics.



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