



Make Your Own News
Publicity Tips for Small Businesses
By Jocelyn Murray

For small businesses with limited marketing budgets, the use of publicity tools can open up innovative ways to get attention and results. Creative yet inexpensive public relations tactics can help you gain market awareness and new business.

All small businesses should utilize the power of the press release. This free tool is used to communicate your news and ideas with editors. Whether you are launching a product, opening a store, hiring a new employee or signing on a significant client, you'll want to let your list of target publications know your news in hopes that they'll publish the information for your prospective clients to read. Having a third party publish information about your business, products or services can provide you with the kind of credibility that no advertisement can.

The list of editors that you'll be sending your news to is just as important as the content of your press release. Research and make a list of the publications that you want to contact along with the names of the appropriate reporters. For example, if you were announcing that you've written a new book on the dietary habits of children, you wouldn't want to direct your press release to a finance editor. Find out how each editor prefers to be contacted (fax, email or snail mail) and always personalize your correspondence.

One of the more traditional ways of getting media attention is to publish the results of your own market research. Whether it's an informal poll of every customer that walks into your establishment or a questionnaire that is mailed to your client base, statistics that work in your favor can be used to promote your product or industry. Business Week highlighted a jam and jelly producer that surveyed CEOs of the nation's largest companies about their breakfast menu choices. Positive survey results about their product were then used to gain significant press coverage and positive publicity.

Try offering information to the press that will give their audience something useful and noteworthy to read. By writing articles for trade publications, you can offer your independent thoughts on current issues or pressing topics. This free exposure, in the form of an informational piece, can be a gold mine for you and your business.



Take your wealth of knowledge a step further by volunteering to speak at trade shows, seminars, industry association luncheons, etc. You can gain significant visibility by getting in front of your target market and offering them practical tips and solutions. Both industry and local media often cover such events looking to cover hot topics, increasing your chances of getting press coverage.

Once you become established as an expert in your line of business or industry, market yourself to radio stations in your area. There are plenty of talk radio shows that are looking for a continual flow of information to give their listeners. Gather some information about the stations and shows you'd like to pursue. Contact the producers and fill them in on what you can offer their listeners.

An event can be an easy way to gain some publicity. Most any kind of event—a seminar, exhibition or charity event—makes you newsworthy, whether the media covers it in a story or just a calendar item.

The media is always looking for new ideas and fresh information. Even with limited resources, your creative public relations efforts can cut through everyday marketing clutter and effectively speak to your customers and prospects.

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