

HOW TO GET FREE PUBLICITY FOR YOUR BUSINESS



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Marketing
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UNDERSTAND WHAT'S NEWSWORTHY

Get to know the news media in your area. Become familiar with what columns run regularly in newspapers and magazines and what kinds of stories are covered. Pay attention to who wrote the stories and the names of the editors. Watch the local news and become familiar with the reporters who cover your type of segments. Getting publicity for your business is more about thinking like a news reporter, a reader or viewer, than about thinking like a business person. Imagine what kinds of stories you would be interested in and you'll start to understand what is newsworthy.

FIND AN ANGLE

Take a long hard look at your business. Is there anything about it that is particularly unique? Who are your customers or vendors? Do you have an association with someone who might be interesting partner for a joint story? Who are your employees? Do any of them have any unusual backgrounds or hobbies? What's happening that's momentous? What charitable intentions do you have? Can you parlay a large donation or special pro-bono work into a newsworthy story? Pay attention to photo opportunities. The media can't resist compelling images, and if you want to get on television, it's all about the visuals.

WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

A well-written press release has a better chance of getting placed. Here are some tips to make it more likely to be read:

- Get the whole story in the first paragraph. It should be short, concise and answer as many of the "who, what, where and when" questions as possible.
- Don't oversell. This is not a brochure. Write just the facts without the promotional language.
- Insert a quote from a notable person. This is where you can sneak some excitement in, because it's not you saying it, it's someone else.
- Write a compelling headline. Don't worry about it being a complete sentence.
- Keep it short. One or two pages is all that will every get read.
- Check spelling and punctuation. A release riddled with typos is more likely to get tossed.
- Put your contact information clearly on the top.
- Double space.
- Center "###" below the last line of the release.

SEND OUT THE RELEASE

You can send a release via fax, Email or mail. There are wire services available such as PR News Wire that will send out to hundreds of news media at once. This can be costly and would not be necessary for local news.

- Attach a photo, with a caption if you mail it.
- If you send it via Email, don't use attachments.
- If you are publicizing any dates, make sure to get it to the media at least 2 weeks in advance.
- Always try to address it to a specific person, not just "editor" to make it easier to follow up.

ALWAYS FOLLOW UP

Find out when it's the best time to make your follow up calls. You want to avoid calling near a deadline because reporters are too busy to give you their attention. By calling during a slower period, they will be much more receptive and appreciative that you understand their business. If you are calling a daily paper or television news show, call in the morning as they get busier as the day goes on. If you are calling a weekly, call at least two days before they close the issue, which is probably about two to three days before the street date.

When you call, always be polite and courteous. Summarize the story in one or two sentences. Remember, this is a pitch. If you don't sound interested, how can he or she be interested? Offer to provide more information or arrange for an interview with a relevant person. Make sure the person mentioned in your article is comfortable talking to the media. It's a good idea to help them prepare.

BE REALISTIC

Time and space are limited and the best news sells. Depending on what else is happening that day, even the most interesting story may not make the cut. Less than half of all press releases get covered. Don't get discouraged and don't take it personally. If you do get coverage remember, journalists are paid to be impartial and report the news. He or she may pick an entirely different angle than you would. Don't expect this to be a story about your company. The best you can possibly hope for is that the reporter gets the names spelled correctly and the facts represented accurately. If you're successful getting that much, celebrate and have it reprinted for your marketing kit!