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**Catering to Beginners, Enthusiasts and Geeks**

**By Marcia Yudkin**

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Recently I had occasion to review several dozen Web sites in one industry — camera stores. I found this eye-opening, as an unfortunate pattern emerged that I believe holds true not only on the Internet but also in paper-based marketing materials, and applies to many professions. First, some background.

Most of us, particularly those who regularly deal with a wide swath of the public, know how to adjust our conversation according to the experience level of our audience. If someone asks to see a particular camera, a retailer explains it differently, depending on whether the person seems to know as much as he does about cameras, or next to nothing. An oncologist explains the same case of cancer differently to the patient than to the patient's doctor.

On paper and on the Web, however, we tend to orient our promotional material to just one kind of audience and only one level of sophistication. If we do this strategically, great. If we make a conscious choice to target one audience rather than another, because the former accounts for higher profits, terrific. But that's not what I saw at the camera store sites.

For beginners, people who don't know much about a product or service, it's a huge mistake to lead with detailed product information. Too much "APS 505 AiAF f/2.8 2x" overwhelms when I'm wondering whether a digital, 35mm or disposable point-and-shoot camera would fit my needs.

Beginners need helpful guidance that takes their goal as the starting point. Questions and answers and products recommended for specific purposes may work best for this audience so long as the descriptions use laypersons' vocabulary.

Enthusiasts, people who love spending money on their hobby, respond well when invited to adventure farther or deeper and meet new challenges in pursuit of their favorite pastime. Activities such as clinics and outings for wildlife photography, sports shots or photojournalism capture the imagination of this group — and get them to spend more money. Since this segment loves exchanging tips and sharing their passion, an online discussion group and an email newsletter containing picture-taking techniques would earn their devotion to a Web site.

Finally we get to the geeks, the experts, the pros, who usually have a rough idea of what they want and might be narrowing down the field to one

or two models or manufacturers. They're the ones that all that "APS 505 AiAF f/2.8 2x" speaks to. I doubt very much they represent the majority of camera buyers, or that they bring a merchant the greatest profit, since they're probably skilled comparison shoppers. Nearly all the sites I looked at mainly appealed to geeks. And I think this was unintentional, due to the camera store owners belonging to this category themselves.

Don't pick out one audience only unless that's your strategic choice. By combining approaches on your Web site, or on a brochure or sales sheet, you can lasso all levels of customers — beginners, enthusiasts and geeks.

### **How To Get Free Publicity For Your Home Business**

**By Dean Phillips**

Did you know you can get free newspaper and television advertising for your home business? How? Just pick up the telephone and call your local media and tell them all about your home business. If they think your home business is interesting enough, they'll come out and interview you, and just like that—free publicity!

You might not know it, but this occurs much more often than you realize. Why? Because the media loves doing those kinds of community interest stories. It makes them appear more sensitive and caring about what's happening in their community, which leads to more viewers and readers—and of course more advertising revenue.

However, depending on how busy they are and what type of other newsworthy events are going on in your community, they might not immediately appear interested in your story.

In the event that happens, try calling them once a week until you get your interview. Don't be rude, but be persistent. Reporters understand about persistence, because that's how they get many of their stories.

## Catering to Beginners, Enthusiasts and Geeks

It also doesn't hurt to be creative. I heard of a story where a home based catering business catered a surprise free lunch for a local television station. They literally walked in the front door of the tv station, and started handing out free lunches to all of the employees—starting with the security guards.

The news staff was so impressed with the quality of the food, they dispatched a news crew to interview the caterer the very next day.

Apparently, someone in higher places saw the interview on television, because two weeks later that catering company was catering lunch at the governor's mansion.

That catering job led to many more catering jobs, and other than a small ad in the yellow pages, that catering company is so busy, it doesn't need to advertise at all.

I know of another story where someone who owned a home based mobile oil change company volunteered to change the oil in the cars of the employees of a local newspaper for free. In the evening addition of that newspaper, the mobile oil change company was featured on the front page.

The company received so many telephone calls from that one newspaper article, they were booked up for months in advance.

Free publicity. You can't buy it, you can't beat it—go get it!

Dean Phillips is an Internet marketing expert, writer, publisher and entrepreneur. Questions? Comments? Dean can be reached at <mailto:>

Visit his website at:

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