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**How to Sell Your News to Reporters**

**By Rusty Cawley**

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If you want create a PR campaign that is effective and consistent, you must learn to market your story to the news media. You must learn to treat reporters as the customers who will either buy or reject your product: raw news.

You should apply the techniques of PR Rainmaking, which is the practice of using the news media to attract customers and clients to your enterprise.

Any effective campaign of PR Rainmaking is grounded in three fundamental ideas:

- a) The reporter is the consumer.
- b) The story is the product that must be tailored for and sold to that consumer.
- c) Reporters will buy your story for their reasons, not yours.

First, the reporter is the consumer

Today's PR specialists often forget this basic principle. The bad ones - the ones that reporters ridicule as mere "flacks" - never learn it.

To some of these folks, the reader or the viewer is their primary consumer. Others consider their client or their CEO to be the consumer of their work.

Wrong.

The PR Rainmaker knows: When it comes to getting your story into the media, you must look upon the reporter as your consumer.

## How to Sell Your News to Reporters

Without the reporter, nothing happens. There is no story for your target audience to view or to read. There is nothing for your CEO to show his directors. There is nothing for your sales team to hand out to prospects.

Without the reporter, all you have is a story idea.

The reporter is the consumer. The reporter is the customer. And you must act accordingly.

Second, the story is the product

It is not enough that you want to sell something. Countless enterprises have lost money trying to sell a product they wanted to sell and no one wanted to buy.

No matter what you produce, you must find a market that wants to purchase your product.

The same holds true when placing your story in the news media. The PR Rainmaker knows that the story is the product. The story must be tailored for the consumer, who is the reporter. Then it must be sold to that reporter.

This is where PR flacks lose their direction. They look upon media relations as mass production. They want to build an assembly line. They want to crank out one press release after another, send out a blast fax, and read their story in the newspapers the next day.

By using these "spray and pray" techniques, a company may well generate media coverage. But that coverage is likely to be ineffective. The key messages will be distorted. The story will go to the wrong audiences. The company will receive no return on its investment other than some newspaper clippings and perhaps some videotape.

The PR Rainmaker knows: The best news stories are earned one by one.

The assembly-line approach rarely works well in media relations. Reporters do not like to buy "off the rack." Each wants a story of his own. Each demands a custom fit.

So it becomes the PR Rainmaker's job to take stock of a reporter's needs and wants. We must tailor the story to fit that reporter. Then we must take that product and sell it to the reporter. We must convince the reporter that our story solves the reporter's problems.

We must keep in mind during every step of developing the campaign: The reporter is the consumer and the story is the product.

Third, reporters buy for their reasons, not ours

It is not unusual to spend hours designing a story for a specific reporter, only to have the reporter reject the idea. This can become incredibly frustrating.

This is one reason why so many flacks resort to assembly–line, blast–fax methods. "Why should I bother?" they say. "Why not just send out a thousand press releases and hope someone somewhere picks up the story?"

But PR Rainmakers understand and accept the challenge of executing an effective campaign. They know that, when it comes to convincing a reporter to buy any particular story, failure is far more likely than success.

As with any sales prospect, a reporter is more apt to say no than yes, even when you have tailored the story especially for that reporter.

Why? Who knows?

Maybe the reporter is working on a seven–part investigative series and doesn't have time. Maybe the reporter is being moved to another news beat. Maybe the reporter is coming down with the flu. Maybe the reporter is going on vacation. Maybe the reporter is just a jerk.

Who knows? Who cares?

When the reporter says no, move on.

Don't argue. Don't rage. Don't resort to spray and pray.

Advance to the next proposal with the next reporter.

Reporters will buy for their reasons, not ours. Keep telling yourself this and you will have a much better chance of holding your temper, maintaining your sanity and placing more stories in the news media.

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### **Four Secrets to Energizing Your News Story**

**By Rusty Cawley**

#### **Four Secrets to Energizing Your News Story by Rusty Cawley**

Every news story must have a FACE. If you forget to put a FACE on your story proposal, your chances of interesting a reporter are nil.

All true PR Rainmakers faithfully practice this fundamental every time they design a story proposal for the news media.

By FACE, the PR Rainmaker means:

## How to Sell Your News to Reporters

- F: Feelings
- A: Analysis
- C: Crisis
- E: Energy

These are the elements of a well-crafted story proposal. Let's look at each part one by one.

1. Feelings are the emotions that your story stirs within the reporter, and thus the reader.

The seven basic emotions are love, hate, anger, fear, sorrow, envy and greed.

There are endless degrees, combinations and variations on these seven. (For example, "pity" is fear blended with sorrow.

"Rage" is an extreme form of "anger."). Your story must strongly arouse one, and only one, of these basic emotions. (Note that only one of these emotions, "love," is positive. This is one reason why news is almost always negative.)

2. Analysis provides the logic that sells the story. Feelings open the door with a reporter, but logic closes the sale.

Analysis may come in the form of numbers, statistics, data, studies, surveys or expert commentary.

The key is that the analysis must at least appear to be objective and accurate.

The analysis allows reporters to take your story seriously. It also gives reporters a subconscious excuse to listen to their feelings.

3. Crisis is the inherent conflict within the story. Without conflict, there is no news. This is what reporters mean when they talk about getting "both sides of the story."

Every story must have at least two sides. Ideally, for the news media, the story has a hero on one side and a villain on the other.

You want portray your company as a hero that is solving a problem.

4. Energy is what results from mixing feelings, analysis and crisis in the right proportions.

Energy is what drives the story.

It is what compels the reporter to want to write the story. It is what compels the editor to give the story good play.

It is what compels the reader to finish the story, to remember your story, to pass it along to friends.

The PR Rainmaker knows: You never take on the media without putting on your game FACE.

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