

It's the Little Details that Can Make or Break a News Story

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**By Carolyn Moncel**

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Have you ever heard of the saying, "One person's trash is another person's treasure?" Well, that statement is a true one, but never more so than in the realm of media relations where so many small-business owners find it so difficult to garner media coverage for themselves or their companies. Allow me to illustrate my point below in an actual incident that happened to one of my clients and the lessons we learned from this experience.

One day a new client approached me about getting media coverage for her company. She had tried writing and submitting press releases on her own but with little luck and decided that it was time to contact a media relations company. We made an appointment to meet and we discussed her business and brainstormed about ways in which to secure coverage in a creative and affordable way. During that meeting and subsequent other ones, I became very familiar with her business and learned why she was so successful. But it was in a casual conversation, which had little to do with her business, that I learned about the information that would allow me to secure news coverage for my new client.

This particular client is a visual arts designer and runs a very successful business in the Midwest, but her one true passion since childhood is gymnastics. She participated in the sport as a child. She still follows the sport on television and even incorporates the sport into the name of her company. I learned that she liked to have people take photographs of her performing handstands near historic structures, and that she had done this all around the country.

It was through that conversation that I learned that she even had a photo taken of her performing a handstand just outside of the World Trade Center several years ago. I asked her why she hadn't shared this information with me earlier and she said, "It was such a little thing that I really didn't think it was very important."

In reality, it was that little-known fact that sealed the deal for local newspaper coverage. When I spoke with the reporter, I was able to strategically mention this "little" fact to the reporter and explain that I

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could supply the actual photo. It mattered less to the reporter that this client was a self-published author and ran a successful business. While all of that information was great, it was the World Trade Center photo that peaked the reporter's interest. In the end, instead of receiving a small blurb in the newspaper, which was what we really expected, she in turn got a front-page story complete with her photo and references to both her business and her love for gymnastics. Plus, this was a very affordable decision because the client could never have afforded an advertisement the size of that article generated.

The point that I'm trying to make is this. Sometimes small-business owners need to depend on the services of communication companies in order to secure media coverage. But whether you are dealing with a big agency or a boutique agency or a freelancer, it's always important to share every detail because sometimes it's the little details, which can make or break a story.

Carolyn Davenport-Moncel is president and founder of Mondave Communications, a global marketing and communications firm based in Chicago and Paris, and a subsidiary of MotionTemps, LLC. Contact her at

or by phone in the United States at 877.815.0167 or  
011.331.4997.9059 in France.

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

**By Rusty Cawley**

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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:

- 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.

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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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