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Leverage the Power of Publicity for Your Small Business

By Isabel Isidro

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Your business is only as good as the number of people who knows about it. For your venture to grow, you need to start spreading the word about your business. You may have the best products your field, but you cannot expect your business to breach the million-dollar mark in sales if only the people in your street know about it. Some entrepreneurs start doing promotions only when their businesses are up and running, while some market their business even before the products or services are fully launched.

There are two ways to get your business noticed: through paid advertising and through public relations. In advertising, you pay to have your message placed in a newspaper, radio or television spot, or your banners displayed in a Web site. In public relations, on the other hand, the article or show that features your story or business is not paid for. Rather, the writer may have come across your story or business through research or references. The writer or media person deems it worthy to mention you or your business to bolster his or her arguments.

Hence, publicity can oftentimes be more effective than advertising. Not only is it cost-effective (oftentimes you are paying for nothing), but also people are apt to remember an article about your business rather than advertising. People find a write-up or special feature about a business more credible and objective than a paid advertising. Publicity also reaches a wider audience: if you are lucky, the national media might even pick up your story.

Even in the online world, free exposure in the traditional media – television, radio or print – can be far more effective than other online marketing strategies. Nina Munk of urbanhound.com wrote in Fuse Magazine that her site saw a dramatic increase in traffic when NBC's Today show mentioned her site – much more than the links from other web sites or postings from message boards. As she wrote in the article, "Forget the power of the Internet: it's television that counts."

Since media has a "herd mentality," once a program features your business or your story, expect other publications and shows to pick it up and use you for their own stories. The mention of urbanhound.com

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at the Today show led to mentions in Newsday, Forbes and Ladies' Home Journal. Without paying a single cent, Munk's site was able to reach a wider audience that his business needs.

How do you attract the journalists to use your story? Here are five ways you can do to succeed in generating free publicity for your business.

1. Carefully target journalists. Since you are courting them to use your story, don't put them off by sending bulk emails to practically all the journalists you know, no matter how totally unrelated your story is to their beat. Identify the kinds of publication that may be interested in your story, and know who in the publication does your kind of stories. Make a list of the newspapers, TV and radio programs that would be appropriate outlets. Then identify the specific reporter or producer interested in your kind of story. If you want publicity for your bonsai business, for example, send your story pitch to a gardening publication or the home living editor of your local newspaper. Find the journalists (whether

print, television or radio) who are most likely to be interested in your story. Send them personal emails or letters.

2. Invest time and energy contacting local newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations. While avoiding becoming pushy, be persistent. Convince the journalists that you are an expert in your field or your story is newsworthy. In the event that their editorial calendar does not include a story such as yours, offer your help to them and let them know that you are available when they need your expertise. Journalists always want a good, well-researched story and will always use every resource available to them. Remember, though, that not everyone will be interested. If your story idea is turned down, try to ask why and use that information to bolster your next story pitch.

3. Make sure that you really have a good story to tell. Do not waste a reporter's time. Few journalists will care if you are hiring a temporary worker, or whether you bought a new modular furniture system. Make a list of story pitches that you can offer to your chosen media outlet. Brainstorm with your family, business partners or friends to help you come up with good stories about you and your business. Sometimes, what may be "normal" for us may be inspiring for other people.

4. Have a good angle. Journalists always look for fresh, provocative story ideas. Develop story angles that you yourself would want to read in a newspaper or watch on television. If you are a caterer, for example, one angle could be the increasing number of customers who wants catered food instead of going out to restaurants. If you are a home-based travel agent, you can pitch a story on the preferences of seniors when traveling abroad.

5. Make your pitch. Write down your story angle and send it to the journalist in a "pitch letter." Your letter may start with a question or interesting fact about your business that could interest your target media's audience. This is called your "hook." Then develop your story idea, stressing how it could benefit their audience. Make your sales pitch no longer than one page, and be sure to include your contact numbers.

Isabel Isidro is the Managing Editor of PowerHomeBiz.com, a leading online resource on home business. For information on starting a small and home-based business, visit PowerHomeBiz.com at

3 Reasons to Tap into the Power of Publicity

By Jenna–Lyn Rounsaville Roman

Publicity is obtaining editorial coverage or features for your business. Publicity is getting your business reported as news. Examples of publicity are newspaper and magazine articles, radio and television interviews and Internet forums and much more. These are just a few reasons you should consider letting your business tap into the power of publicity.

1. Effective - Publicity has been proven to be 10 times more effective than traditional advertising. Your customers believe what they read in the newspaper or watch on the TV news because humans by nature believe what is reported to them as news.

2. Affordable - Obtaining publicity can cost as little as \$0 dollars. Business owners can substitute a little time and imagination for money or hire publicity professionals, many of which have very affordable rates when compared to advertising.

3. 3rd Party Credibility - Having reporters write about your business in a news format gives your business 3rd party credibility that's extremely valuable. Anyone can sing their own business' praises, but getting respected people in the media to do it provides a type of credibility that ads and money just can't buy.

There are numerous other reasons to use publicity. Next time you are looking for a new way to get the word out about your business, consider tapping into the power of publicity.

Jenna Roman co–owns and operates JR Publicity, an Englewood, NJ–based public relations and marketing company with her husband, Josh Roman. For additional information, visit

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