

Make front page news by NOT inviting the media

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**Make front page news by NOT inviting the media**

**By David Leonhardt**

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Not a single reporter showed up at our news event. And we were THRILLED!

Not a single photographer showed up to capture the moment. And we were pleased as punch!

Not a single newspaper knew about the event. And we received front page coverage in every one!

You can make front page news by keeping the media away. But how did we do it? Here is the media relations plan we used:

**BACKGROUND:** A few years ago, I was working for a politician. In fact, he was a Canadian Member of Parliament (MP). That was about the time that Canada Post decided not to deliver mail to homes in new developments. Instead, new homeowners had to pick up their mail at community "superboxes" near the end of their streets. After laying down big bucks for fancy new homes, people expected the same door-to-door service they were used to, and my MP took the heat . . . even though Canada Post was an arms-length organization of the government.

**GOAL:** Our goal was to demonstrate that my MP cared, that he was on their side, that he was doing everything he could to help them.

**IDEA:** One of the complaints the new residents had was that they were not receiving their junk mail (Go figure!), including weekly grocery specials and, by coincidence, my MP's mailing to constituents. This gave me an idea. Why not send my MP door to door to deliver his bulletin, explaining how he, too, was frustrated that Canada Post would not deliver his bulletin to them.

**CHALLENGE NUMBER ONE:** But what about the majority of people who would not be home to see how my MP shared their gripes? We needed media coverage, so that everyone would read about it in their local newspaper.

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**CHALLENGE NUMBER TWO:** This is a juicy story for reporters. Imagine the headlines: "Resident sock it to MP". Imagine the photos of angry residents waving their fists in rage against Canada Post. My MP would not look good one bit. The media had to stay away. But how would we get media coverage?

**METHOD:** We would have to report to the media "after the fact" that my MP had just gone door-to-door. We would have to supply everything the newspapers would need so that they have no need to recreate the event, search for angry residents to interview or ignore the story altogether.

First I wrote a news release. OK, so it did not read quite like a typical news release. It read like a newspaper article. Actually, it read like five different newspaper articles, because I wrote a completely different story for each of the five newspapers in the area. To some degree, I was able to emulate each one's style.

Next, we decided to provide photographs. We dressed my MP in a postal cap and had him carrying a postal bag. I snapped shots of him at doorways chatting with residents. This was just too "human interest" for any newspaper to ignore. Off to the one-hour photo developer, then we chose the five best shots and attached one to each of the news releases.

Zoom, zoom. We hand delivered an envelope to each newspaper. The entire process took us just five hours from knocking on the first door.

**RESULT:** Each newspaper had its own, unique, original story with its own, unique, original photo. This made the journalists happy. Four out of the five editors even used the headlines I provided! It also made readers, many of who received two or three of the newspapers, believe the media had been there in person . . . making the story all the more credible.

Can you repeat this success? Yes. If you want to get great media coverage, but you are afraid the media will pick up a negative angle, this is the recipe to use: Position your business as you would like to be seen. Find a way to demonstrate your position or characteristic. Write the story for each newspaper as the newspaper would write it, but place it in the format of a news release. Get some great visuals, going for action or something with a twist, and ensure each newspaper has a unique photo. Let the newspapers know that no other media outlet has the same photograph.

Of course, it is always best to invite the media to your event and serve donuts, but sometimes NOT inviting them is a better way to get not just "a" story, but the "right" story.

David Leonhardt offers dozens more creative ways to make your business front page news in the media relations "how-to" guide *Get In The News!* at

. For basic media interview training, visit

, or find out more about David Leonhardt at

.

## **10 Steps To Unleash Your Lead PR Machine**

**By John Jantsch**

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PR is a powerful small business marketing tool. By PR, I mean getting positive press mentions about your firm in local, trade and national publications.

The reason these mentions are so powerful is because they are seen to come from unbiased 3rd parties. So, they are more believable. People are conditioned to think your ad messages are just sales hype, but when they read about how great you are in the local business journal, it must be true.

A lot of people think that gaining positive PR is luck. Maybe that's true to a certain extent, but more than luck, its the result of a systematic commitment to generating PR.

PR is a funny thing, the more they write about you, the more they'll write about you. The hardest part is getting the PR machine rolling.

Here's my step by step system for generating positive press coverage.

Step 1 – Target your media sources, including a growing list of Internet based media and news resources. Start networking with these media targets today by requesting editorial calendars, sending industry information, commenting on stories they write, passing on surveys and data, inviting them to workshops. Build relationships before you ask for the order! Tip: Network with the advertising sales folks at the publications too, they will give you lots of good information about who does what and where in the course of trying to sell you an ad.

Step 2 – Create three or four central media themes for the year that support your core marketing message.

Step 3 – Create a list of ten to twelve minor, but interesting, marketing related themes for ongoing PR. You need to fill in with volume while you are working on the front page feature.

Step 4 – Create a PR calendar and assign a PR theme and goal for each month. Focus on one publication or one writer and you will be amazed at how much you can accomplish. Remember to target editorial calendars (Publications will often assign themes to a month. Match your pitch to their theme.)

Step 5 – Write a fully developed pitch for each of your major themes – A pitch is a story idea that you can "pitch" to a member of the media. This is not a press release, but more of a sales job. Wrap your story idea around a news angle or trend and package the pitch to interest the readers of a specific publication you are pitching. You can change and repackage your pitches as needed. These are reserved for your central media themes.

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Step 6 – Formulate one page press releases with catchy headlines for each of your minor themes.

Here's my free press release writing application.

Step 7 – Once a month, target your core media list and distribute a press release or pitch for a major theme. Post all press releases on a national wire service such as PRWeb and send copies of your press releases to clients and prospects. Don't forget op–eds and letters to the editor.

Step 8 – Follow–up with your core media list by telephone and offer some new piece of news or trend angle that you did not include in your pitch or press release.

Step 9 – Track media coverage in local and trade press, set–up Google Alerts for a number of key related terms and reprint for marketing purposes any media coverage received.

Step 10 – Send handwritten thank you notes (or t–shirts) to members of the media to thank them for an interview or mention.

Are you starting to get a glimpse of how combining advertising, PR and referrals can build momentum and create marketing energy?

John Jantsch is a marketing coach, author and creator of the Duct Tape Marketing System. You can get more information about the Duct Tape System and download your free copy of "How To Grow Your Small Business Like Crazy by visiting

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