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**Smart PR Strategies To Get Your Web Site Media Coverage**

**By Kevin Nunley**

**Smart PR Strategies To Get Your Web Site Media Coverage by Kevin Nunley**

Paul opens his favorite business magazine to find a fawning interview with Amazon's Jeff Bezos. Then he picks up the morning paper and reads a long story on a new donut chain being built in his town. Later he catches a feature piece on CNN about a guy who sells funny handmade shoes and learns accounting secrets from a CPA in Ohio.

Media hands out millions of dollars in free publicity every day. As well as advertising works, a media story about you almost always pulls better. The familiar and respected voice of a newspaper editor, magazine writer, TV reporter, or radio personality talking about you holds lots of weight with the audience.

How do all these businesses get media coverage? The secret varies depending on what your business does and HOW BIG it is.

Large in-the-news businesses like Amazon.com get coverage for practically any development. Political figures find their words in the media for almost any pronouncement. The local college football team gets press even if there is nothing much to cover.

**A Different PR Strategy For Small Businesses**

Your small business can have a much tougher time if you try to approach media the same way big organizations do. Media is almost entirely owned by large conglomerates and

## Smart PR Strategies To Get Your Web Site Media Coverage

staffed by media pros who have never worked in a small business. The overall industry mindset is that big business is news and small business is—well—rarely news.

This all changes, though, if you offer good information or advice that will be helpful to the media outlet's audience. Newspapers love it when a tax expert offers tips around tax return time. Radio stations get a big kick out of anyone who can keep their audience laughing. TV likes anything that is visual and brings out emotion (hide the keys to a new car in a pool of jello, ask contestants to swim to win, and watch every TV station in town turn out).

Let's focus on you as the media savvy expert. This is without question the best strategy for consistently getting your small business in the media.

Start by taking inventory of the areas you are, or could become, an expert in. Think in terms of the kinds of information a general audience would find interesting, helpful, or moving (these days many in the media try less to explain and more to create emotion).

If you have a day care center, make a list of ten ways tired parents can keep an energetic youngster entertained and learning. Run an auto body shop? How about ways to avoid getting taken by mechanics and insurance companies after an accident.

If your area of expertise can relate to a hot topic in the news—all the better! Historians, lawyers, detectives, and political scientists get in the media several times each year by giving informed tips relating to an event or scandal in the news. You may even be able to provide a local angle for a national story.

### Finding Media Who Will Cover You

I have found the best way to get covered by newspapers is to first find the reporter who handles stories like yours. Read through the paper's web site. It usually tells which reporters are assigned to particular topics (like the business editors or technology reporter). Many papers give reporters wide leeway in what stories they cover. Call the reporter and deliver a short, too-the-point message on why you have

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a story THEIR AUDIENCE would find interesting. Get to the juicy, memorable part first.

Follow up quickly with a press release, question and answer page, and a bio about your business history (sometimes called a backgrounder).

This same strategy works well for getting covered in magazines, industry journals, and on major web sites. Use search engines to find articles on topics that match your business. Look up the article, find the author's email address, and suggest another related story that, of course, includes your business or expert information. This often works surprisingly well to generate PR for you.

ProfNet.com has a service where journalists and writers can post topics they are trying to get information on. As a

business or non-profit, you pay \$50 to \$100 per year to see these posts. You multiply your chances of getting covered by ten when you respond to a reporter with good usable info.

Magazines often post a list of subjects they will be covering from one issue to the next throughout the year. This is particularly true of industry publications.

### Expanding To Radio

While you have your media materials in hand, call local talk and news radio shows. Speak with the host or producer. Explain what is interesting about your information and, again, follow up with your release, Q&A, and bio.

The same strategy can work for getting you on top radio morning shows. Radio comprises well over half of all the media outlets in the US and many other countries. Don't over look it.

As you get media coverage, collect quotes from the media folks who have worked with you.

"Jean kept the phones lit up for an hour"  
KXXX San Diego, CA

"Interesting information every home owner should know."  
The Daily News Canton, OH

Build your list of stations and publications your business has been featured in. Include reprints when possible. Media folks love to cover stories and feature experts who have already been successful elsewhere.

Stay in touch with media who cover you. Send a handwritten thank you note to editors, reporters, and on-air personalities. Make sure YOU are the expert they think of when your topic comes up in the news throughout the year.

### **Can Media Coverage Build An Online Business? You Bet It Can!**

**By David Leonhardt**

As someone with expertise in media relations, I've been asked if media coverage and publicity can build an online business. The real question is whether what happens offline really matters online. And the answer is unquestionably, "Yes!"

Here are ten reasons why media coverage can help your online business grow:

Every one of us, even if we spend four to eight hours a day in front of a computer screen in our underwear, still lives in the real world. Our opinions, desires, priorities, and decisions are heavily influenced by television, radio, books, magazines, and newspapers. Every business, online or offline, can benefit from positive media exposure.

Almost no business can afford to be absent from the Internet these days; even a local real estate agent gains a competitive edge from having a web site. By the same token, an online business gains a strong advantage by having an offline presence. Online and offline marketing of all types support each other.

Search engines won't bring most web site owners business. I just did a Google search for "books", and found about 85.2 million entries. Ninety-five percent of searchers will likely click on the first two (Amazon.com and BarnesAndNoble.com), most of the others will never get to the second page of the searches. This means that 85,199,990 web site book sellers cannot rely on search engines. How about searching for the word bookstore? Still almost seven million entries, and guess who the top two are?

You can't cheat the search engines. Try a search for books and carpentry. The odds are much better, with only 106,000 entries. That still means 105,990 web site book sellers will rarely be found. How about books and promotion? Almost two million entries. If a million carpentry book sellers are reading this article, five are smiling. The rest will only smile with an offline presence, such as a great article in their local newspaper or a call-in show on a radio station half way across the world.

## Smart PR Strategies To Get Your Web Site Media Coverage

The media can create interest in your product or service if they feature you as part of an interesting story. Online or offline, that's what media coverage does. A good story is gold.

The media is just starting now to wake up to the exciting things happening online. Timing is everything and this is the time.

The media are now working increasingly online. The online and offline worlds are converging more than ever before. Articles that appear in local papers, industry magazines and even commentary on radio broadcasts find themselves on the Internet. That can often mean powerful links to your web site. Publicity offline means promotion online.

If you are running a contest, placing a new interactive program on your site, winning an award, taking donations for a charity or doing anything noteworthy online, it is of interest in the offline world. The media can act as a funnel for people who spend less time than you and I do in front of a computer screen.

In the mainstream media, you are trustworthy. If they see it on TV or in the newspaper, people believe it. (Funny, they SAY they don't trust the media, but their actions speak louder.) Since web marketing is about relationships and trust (That is your strategy, right?), you can build that relationship with people who are only now getting online or who may not even be online for another couple years. By the time they are ready to buy from you, the relationship has already begun because they have carried your offline credibility (that's the biggest value of media coverage) with them onto the Internet.

In the mainstream media, you are real. I know many people who still don't buy anything online. They simply do not trust someone they cannot see. Sure, you might be honest, but how do they know? You could disappear into the ether tomorrow. While bricks-and-mortar stores can close just as fast, there is an impression that they are more real and more permanent. You can increase your realness and permanence through a media presence, and thereby increase your customer base.

Media relations is not always easy and not everyone can make it. You have to have something interesting to tell and have a creative way to make it newsworthy. But it is a low-cost way to drive traffic to your web site. And you may not need to get onto the front page of USA Today to succeed. You may simply want a mention in a few niche magazines where your targeted traffic can be found.

So if you don't like the idea of being a million entries down on a web search, or even 60 entries down, consider a low-cost, effective alternative - the media. With the right angle, media relations and publicity can expand your engine faster than search engines.

After a decade and a half as one of Canada's top consumer advocates, often conducting over 600 media interviews each year, David Leonhardt is sharing his knowledge with others. Pick up a copy of his special report "Get In The News!" at

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Public Relations Strategies: Focus PR Campaigns with Media Coverage Analysis  
How to Do Well by Doing Good: Generating Traffic And Profits Through Charity Projects And  
Community Involvement  
Promote Your Business With Dogs, Cats, and Rats  
Affordable Legal Coverage

The Classified List  
Press Release E-Manual  
101 tips to stay fit and live longer.  
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