

To get free publicity, "Sell The Story -- Not the Store"

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By George McKenzie

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Imagine yourself sitting down in a meeting room to listen to a presentation by a speaker.

The speaker begins by saying, "Statistics show" and then proceeds to prattle off a list of figures aimed at making a point. Before long, though, you'll probably be thinking about all the other places you'd rather be.

Now imagine that the speaker begins by saying "Once upon a time"

You automatically start paying attention because you know you're about to hear a story.

People love stories. And they'll stop what they're doing if they think they're going to hear a good one.

The greatest teachers of all time have taught their lessons through stories, anecdotes, examples. Even parables.

And you'll start getting loads of free publicity from the media if you understand that they're really in the storytelling business.

Joan Stewart is a former newspaper reporter and editor with more than 20 years experience. She says that during her career, she got hundreds of calls from people saying, in so many words, "Cover me, pay

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attention to me, give me publicity."

Of course, what they really wanted was free advertising for some product they were selling. And when Joan would ask, politely of course, why the public would want to know more about it, they'd launch into details about how wonderful their product was and all the features it offered.

Among professional sales people, this is called "selling features instead of benefits."

Among news decision-makers this is called, selling the store, not the story.

In other words, people who want publicity often try to sell their product (the store), when they should be trying to sell a story connected to their product.

Getting media coverage on any given day is something of a crapshoot. But you'll increase your chances enormously if you offer the media stories that contain one or more of the following elements:

- They're controversial and/or timely.
- They raise eyebrows.
- They affect large numbers of people.
- They deal with pocketbook issues.
- They feature dogs and kids.
- They show David beating Goliath.
- They highlight milestones, records, and firsts.
- They introduce new ideas and technologies.

When I worked as a TV anchor at KMSP TV in the Twin Cities in the late 70's, one of our competitors, WCCO, ran a great promotion campaign that I've never forgotten because it reduced the nature of news to its essence.

They boasted, "We tell you what you need to know, and what you like to know."

When you're pitching an idea to someone in the media, ask yourself "Why is this something people need to know or would like to know?"

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If you have a good answer to that question, you'll find it easy to "sell the story, not the store" to news decision-makers. And when you accomplish that, they'll get that story on the air or in print—where thousands of potential customers will see it.

### **Web Site Promotion – Getting Publicity**

#### **By Sinnge Eeyune**

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Web Site Promotion – Getting Publicity

Publicity, if handled properly, can get your web site the kind of promotion that cannot be bought, or at least not afforded. As a marketer, that is always the goal of my publicity and PR efforts.

Here is a good example of web site promotion that the site itself could not afford but managed to accomplish through publicity. A new web site is burgeoning to make it easier on those of us who have to deal with the horrors of parking at any one of the nation's airports, [www.AirportParkingReservations.com](http://www.AirportParkingReservations.com). This web site is designed to let people reserve a parking space at one of those little parking areas that always surround a major airport. Instead of renting advertising space in the country's newspapers their clever marketing and promotions people instead issued press releases to the newspapers and other media. Several newspapers ran a short story about the web site in their travel section, the Houston Chronicle being one of them.

Advertising in the Houston Chronicle is expensive, and worth it, if you can afford it. The Chronicle charges approximately \$162 per square inch per day for ads. Since the parking reservations web site story took up about 10 square inches they effectively received \$1620 of free advertising in The Chronicle. This was not the only paper that picked up their story either. If just 10 newspapers ran their story, we can estimate that they saved \$16,200.

These kinds of savings and press coverage are the reasons why Houston Web Developers encourages its clients to avidly seek publicity. An easy way to get started is writing. Write press releases and articles about you, your company, its products, and services. Write about their benefits and use. Write about how they differ from your competitors and emphasize their strengths. Then send the press release and articles out and watch the magic happen.

For specific help with your marketing and publicity campaign contact [HoustonWebDevelopers.com](http://HoustonWebDevelopers.com).

Sinnge Eeyune is a Solutions Designer and Copywriter for [HoustonWebDevelopers.com](http://HoustonWebDevelopers.com). His award winning designs and insightful articles make him a true [HoustonWebDevelopers.com](http://HoustonWebDevelopers.com) treasure.

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