

Getting Publicity

How to maximize your organizations media appeal

Using Media Wisely

By

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Getting Publicity

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Getting Publicity - It's visibility, creating awareness, and raising a positive profile.

What is publicity?

Publicity is what you use to get attention, without paying for it. The most usual source of publicity is the media.

Why do you need publicity?

Publicity allows you to stand out from the crowd and this can give you the competitive edge you need.

What is the purpose of publicity?

Publicity stimulates public interest, creates business activity, it enhances profits and increases public awareness of both products and services.

With careful planning publicity can:

- Magnify visibility.
- Create intense interest in a onetime event or project.
- Be part of an ongoing promotion - community or industry specific.
- Turn a not for profit organization into a profitable business resource.
- Help you get a head start on the competition.
- Establish a new image to replace an outdated one.
- Aid in breaking out of a status quo slump.
- Get new ventures off the ground.
- Provide a test market for new ideas.
- Generate good will.

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What are the advantages of publicity?

Cost

Advertising and publicity both make use of the media to reach the public. Publicity is considerably less expensive.

Size of the audience

Publicity is powerful. It can tell your story to thousands of potential customers.

Credibility

Publicity lends an air of credibility that's missing in advertising.

Impact

Publicity is persuasive. It can shape public opinion, mold personal images and even reverse negative attitudes.

Versatility

Publicity can be used to place you in the spotlight at almost any time and in any place you choose.

Longevity

Publicity offers longevity by providing you with a permanent record. Once you have been mentioned in the media, you can show clippings to potential clients.

What's your publicity Quotient?

1. Is it necessary to "know someone" in the press to receive free publicity? (T or F)
2. Sending invitations to the media is a waste of time because nobody ever responds to them. (T or F)
3. Advertisers are offered free publicity according to the amount of money they spend on commercials. (T or F)
4. Only spokespersons for big corporations and major industries are qualified to appear on radio and television talk shows. (T or F)
5. Threatening to discontinue your advertising is an effective way to make the media pay attention to you. (T or F)
6. Contributing to a charitable cause is good publicity. (T or F)
7. Sending gifts or offering to buy meals for reporters is an accepted way to get coverage of an event. (T or F)
8. Members of the media appreciate your calling them whenever you think of a possible story idea (T or F)
9. Publicity efforts are wasted unless they appear in influential publications or on important television programs. (T or F)

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Answers:

1. False - but it helps to establish a rapport with local media. Not just for free publicity, but to get to know what local radio, television and print looks for when it comes to "news".
2. False - but you need to build a relationship with the media, and provide them with a relevant, timely and informative reason to attend, they will NOT come if it is strictly self-serving.
3. True - often advertisers will be offered a "perk" if they are in an advertising program with the media.
4. False - an expert is someone who establishes themselves as knowledgeable and can follow through with accurate and timely information.
5. False - threats don't work - you can get more with positive reinforcement than with anger.
6. True - when combining your media release with a charitable cause it's often picked up because the charity is over more interest.
7. False - however, if you want to make sure that the press attend your event, send a complimentary pass, a dinner ticket or a copy of the book.
8. True - establishing a rapport with journalists, publishers and editors is key to the success of your media campaign. Always call when you think there might be a good story.
9. False - local media is often as effective as national coverage. However if the story is a good one, it could be picked up by the more influential publications and stations.

Opportunities for Publicity

First plan to do something noteworthy; second notify the media of your accomplishment. The secret to success lies in finding activities that not only draw public attention, but also draw attention from the media. Learn what the media want. What events are considered newsworthy? Discover what types of activities are frowned on by the press.

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The following is a quick guide to acceptable practices.

Inform, educate and entertain.

Journalists always need new material to fill pages of print and hours of broadcast time each day. But there are specific requirements to inform, to entertain or to otherwise aid the audience in some way.

No self serving or hard sell tactics.

Never think of publicity as advertising, make sure you are involved in a newsworthy activity, not merely espousing a self-serving cause.

Local angle or national slant.

Learn the media structure and how to catch their interest.

Putting together a Publicity Planner

Introduction:

In order to achieve anything worthwhile you need a clear vision of where you are going. In the same way publicity deserves an action plan, a diagram, a schedule of what you want to accomplish. The publicity planner is simply a place to store your materials and a system for setting down your strategies. Before you start to publicize yourself, you need to know how you are going to respond to the attention you receive. By setting up a permanent publicity planner, you will have on hand all the basics you need for your entire publicity program. Once your planner is in place it will become the center of your publicity related activities.

The Place - Permanent vs Portable.

Choosing the location for your planner is important. As we work through today, visualize yourself going through the motions, sending announcements to the media, responding to telephone calls from the press, scheduling promotional activities. Think about the best location for your planner. What will be most convenient for you?

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Your publicity planner is actually a filing system for keeping track of paperwork you will need like press releases, announcements, media lists, and publicity photographs.

The physical space required is equivalent to an area needed for storing 25 to 30 file folders. No matter how large or how small your Publicity Planner it deserves a designated location. You could determine that a drawer in your filing cabinet will work or you could choose to have a portable system that allows you to carry your information with you.

The simplest system is a plastic free-standing rack with slots designed to hold ten or twelve manila folders. Or you could consider a plastic cube with hanging folders, or there is also a suitcase style file box that works well if you want to travel with your planner.

Most of the tools you will need for your kit are basic office supplies. But it is helpful if they are designated to the planner and remain with it. This will save you time once you are involved in a media campaign. Once you have decided what type of system you prefer you will need to set aside the following items:

Basic Planner

- 25 - 30 file folders
- labels for each folder
- your business cards
- the organization's brochures
- letterhead and envelopes

Customized files

Correspondence - whenever you communicate in writing with the media, keep copies and file in chronological order. Put your earliest letters in the back of the file.

Industry news - You want to keep on top of developments in your field. You want to be known as an expert. Separate the information into categories as you collect more information.

Clippings and quotes - Every time you are mentioned in print media, clip a copy and save the article.

Promotion ideas - Keep all your ideas in one place. Don't overlook any opportunity for publicity. R & D other companies

Media List - This is the most important element in your planner. Keep it up to date.

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Publicity photos - Make sure you have a good up-to-date corporate shots as well as personal photos where required.

A Planning Calendar - You will need a one year calendar for noting your action plan and keeping track of your commitments. Style doesn't matter as long as it's convenient to use and has room to write instructions and reminders. Try and find one that lists all the holidays and special events if they are relevant to your organization.

Set up folders for the following:

- Your Corporate Biography
- Industry and Organization Brochures
- Business Cards for any "experts"
- Clippings and Quotes
- Community Events
- Correspondence
- Fact Sheets
- Industry News
- Interview Notes
- Letters from Customers, testimonials
- Media advisories
- Media kit folders, labels, lists
- New product/initiative releases
- Press releases sent
- Promotional ideas
- Public service announcements
- Publicity photos
- Public speaking/teaching information
- Published articles
- Stationery
- Suggested questions for interviews
- Writing opportunities

Preparing the Publicity Plan

Like your other business goals, publicity requires planning, knowledge and effort. At the beginning you must ask yourself how much public attention do you want? Your answer will determine the amount of time you will need to devote to your publicity program.

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In order to determine how much time you will need to spend on your plan, please answer the following questions -

What are your long-range and short-range publicity goals?

- ✓ To announce specific events you sponsor?
- ✓ To create greater public awareness of your activities?
- ✓ To attract new customers or clients?
- ✓ To expand your market to include new geographical areas?
- ✓ To enhance your personal or company image?
- ✓ To become a nationally known expert, commanding high fees for services?
- ✓ To turn your hobby into a career?
- ✓ Other?

Whom would you like to reach through your publicity?

- ✓ Small sets of localized or specialized customers?
- ✓ Large groups of individuals or businesses with specific interests?
- ✓ The general public in a particular community?
- ✓ The general public nationwide or even worldwide.
- ✓ Other?

Where do most of your customers get their information about you and your products?

- ✓ Local newspaper?
- ✓ Local radio and television?
- ✓ National magazine coverage?
- ✓ National radio and television?
- ✓ Other, including specialized media?

How much time are you willing to devote to your publicity efforts on a regular basis?

- ✓ Daily - less than one hour. One to two hours.
- ✓ Weekly - less than one hour. One to two hours. Two to four hours.
- ✓ Monthly - less than one hour. One to two hours. Two to four hours.

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Finding Opportunities for Publicity

Become an opportunist. Go out and make things happen! Do something interesting. Ride the coat tails of a national trend. Read the newspapers and make note of the headlines. Can you position your product or service around that headline? Subscribe to the Stats Canada daily report - is there anything relevant in their findings? Use the statistics to your advantage. Take part in public events.

A few examples to consider -

- What is the current fashion trend?
- What commodity is in short supply?
- What is the latest food fad?
- What is the current technophobia?

Watch for statistics in the media for instance - more than 25% of the work force has a home based business - latest study shows that 25% of senior citizens over the age of 80 need home day care. Connect with your local associations for their input on statistics relevant to their area of expertise. Use their statistics in an article which you send to them for inclusion in their latest newsletter, magazine or website. Whenever you participate in a public event find out who is in charge of publicity. Call or write and offer to put on some type of demonstration, offer to supply a door prize, provide a training program.

10 ways to create your own opportunities.

1. **Aim for variety.** You'll need more than one good idea to keep in the media spotlight. The key is diversification, constantly creating new opportunities. You can do this by developing a variety of strategies for self-promotion and then targeting different media.
2. **Make things happen.** A good example of this is the local forgotten dry cleaning store - he contacted the media offering to clean old clothing and donate it to the homeless. The results? Lots of media attention, and an increase in customers interested in helping the homeless.
3. **Consider a community good deed.** Get involved in something you like. Be willing to give time, money, and product to the community to gain public awareness.
4. **Adopt a charitable cause.** Choose a cause you believe in, donate product, do demonstrations, make the effort and the media will come.

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5. **Set up a beautification committee.** Do this on your own, or in a group. Take action and leadership. Beautify the local school grounds, the church, the community.
6. **Establish an award.** Hold a formal presentation ceremony and invite both the public and the press to honour someone in your community.
7. **Try the backdoor approach.** Your hobby may be more interesting than your professional career, your office building may be more interesting than your business. Don't make the mistake of thinking that all publicity must be focused directly on your occupation or company. You might be the largest collector of toy soldiers, or live in an historic home.
8. **Use the celebrity connection.** You don't have to have an award winning movie star to your place of business, you can use a local author, celebrity athletes, disc jockeys etc. If you ever attend a promotional event where there is a celebrity, introduce yourself and invite them to your place of business.
9. **Join Clubs.** Take an active role in the club of your choice. Run for office, head a committee, better yet, put yourself in charge of media coverage. You can then get yourself quoted and likely your company will be mentioned as well.
10. **Use the calendar as a resource.** Holidays - take advantage of all major holidays. Check almanacs for lesser-known special days. Anniversaries - personal milestones make good media coverage. Seasonal activities - summer breezes, winter warm-ups etc. Take advantage of every season to get that extra bit of media coverage.

Perfectly Promotable Ideas

1. Arrange an event.
2. Make a donation.
3. Give or get an award.
4. Make a long-term contribution to your community.
5. Stand out from the crowd.
6. Speak out or write about what you are doing.

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Understand Media Accessibility - start small.

The most common mistake we make is to aim too high. Don't expect to get exposure on network television and in national publications with your first effort. Think of media as a mountain range, the lowest levels are the easiest for the beginner. They don't require much effort, but you have to get through them to proceed further up the slope.

The broadcast media - radio and television.

Level one

- Local cable television, low wattage radio stations and community announcements on regular TV stations.

Level two

- Local radio and TV programs produced by professional staff. Locally produced talk shows are among the easiest to tap into.

Level three

- Expert level - you will have to spend a great deal of time on your publicity planner to get to this level.

Print Media

Level one

Newsletters - for clubs, churches and local business associations.
High school, college, university and alumni newspapers & magazines.

Level two

Weekly newspapers; community papers; local trade association publications; national business and social organization publications.

Level three

Special interest publications, national trade associations and professional journals.

Level four

Big city newspapers and national magazines. In order to reach the top you must make publicity an important part of your overall program for success.

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Rules for writing a media release.

Style - always write in the third person - "he" "she". Begin with the most important facts, follow up with the less important facts and end with the least important information.

Appearance - always use your letterhead. Type in black using standard typeface.

Layout - leave plenty of space for editing. Double space and allow margins of 1 inch. Make the press release eye appealing.

Writing the headlines - Practice alliteration, make use of puns, offer "inside" secrets or consumer hints.

Grammar - Be brief. Use simple declarative sentences. State your information in a straight forward manner. Always include a.m. or p.m. in lowercase letters. Never abbreviate the first time you refer to something or someone. The first time you refer to an individual spell out the entire name. Use the names of both city and state or province. Always include the year in the date. Never use jargon.

Sample media release.

Media Release

CONNECTUS INTERNATIONAL KICKS OFF GRASS ROOTS CANADIAN INITIATIVE
We Choose Canada Tells Stories of Why Canadians Love Their Country

For Immediate release - Oakville, Ontario, July 1, 2003:

ConnectUs International today announced the launch of a major new grassroots initiative - We Choose Canada - a showcase of why Canadians love their country. The goal of We Choose Canada is to learn and share the stories of individuals by visiting and interviewing a variety of people - from Canadians to recent immigrants in small towns and large cities, and finding out what they love the most about this great nation. On July 1st, armed with tape recorders and digital cameras, two businesswomen will begin in Ontario, asking the question, "Why do you choose to live and work in Canada?" With sponsorship funding, their travel will be extended to other provinces and territories. Meanwhile, residents are invited to share their answers to this question online at www.wechoosecanada.com

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Canada continues to be ranked as one of the United Nation's top countries for high standards of living. Yet, given recent events, Canada's outstanding reputation is tarnished by perceptions that have a detrimental effect on our businesses and our national spirit. It is critical for Canadians and residents to unite and dispel these myths about Canada," said Donna Messer, founder of ConnectUs International, at a recent international conference. "We are proud to live in Canada - let's tell the world why!"

Donna Messer and business colleague, Debbie Trenholm, are proud Canadians who throughout their careers have been promoting Canada, Canadians and Canadian businesses domestically and on the world's stage. The two met recently at an international conference and discovered that they shared a common dream - to promote the positive aspects about their country as good news to the world. "Canada is a safe and secure country, one where people can live and work without fear. Everyone has reasons why they choose to live in Canada. These stories are important to acknowledge the strength our country, and to present a positive image, and united front," said Trenholm.

Once the tour is complete, the collected stories will be featured in a book that will showcase the diversity of our nation, the array of cultures we and be a voice for what Canada has to offer. While meeting every Canadian is impossible, Messer and Trenholm are encouraging everyone to become Canadian Ambassadors and share their stories about living in Canada in order to promote the good news about our country; a place that we are proud to call home. If you are interested in becoming part of this innovative initiative, contact Messer at 905-337-9578 or Trenholm at 613- 851-1785 or visit www.wechoosecanada.com .

About We Choose Canada:

The We Choose Canada is a unique initiative aimed to learn and share the stories of individuals by visiting and interviewing a variety of people, from Canadians to recent immigrants, sharing their stories about living in Canada in order to promote the good news about our country; a place that we are proud to call home.

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Writing a media release -

Each time you need to send a media release out, begin by writing down the answers to the following questions.

- What is the main point your want to make in your release?
- What are the major elements of your story?
- Who?
- What?
- Why?
- Where?
- When?

If you are introducing a new product, selling a service or sponsoring an event, how much does it cost?

Are there any special features (e.g. free admission for children under 12)

What are the activities you have planned and the specific hours for each event?

Are there any restrictions?

What are the newsworthy aspects of this event, activity or announcement?

Before you send your press release review the following list to make sure that you have prepared it properly.

1. Did you use your letterhead?
2. Have you included the release date and contact person?
3. Does the page look neat and visually balanced?
4. Have you stated your basic facts? Who, Where, What, Why and When in the first paragraph?
5. Is there genuine newsworthiness or public interest in the announcement?
6. Have you proofread for spelling, grammar, punctuation and accuracy?

7 Ways to get your name out there for publicity purposes

1. Write a book.
2. Write an article.
3. Make a speech at a local service club.

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4. Write letters to the editor.
5. Write a column for industry newsletters.
6. Send in helpful hints to newspapers or magazines
7. Publish a list of consumer tips - Top 10 ways to.....

Promotion potential - ideas that can create a publicity opportunity.

Arrange an event

1. If you have a store front location use your imagination to create an unusual exhibit to lure shoppers and then notify the media. Depending on your kind of business, some possible displays include people posing as mannequins, pets available for adoption, a candy making demonstration or a fashion show.
2. Band together with neighbouring business owners and hold a theme event such as a Spring Fling or a Winter Festival.
3. Get together with other artists and crafts people and put on a craft fair. Make it an annual event, include strolling musicians and add activities for children and you're practically guaranteed a spot on the 6 o'clock news.
4. Add dash to your grand opening with pipers piping, singers singing, or dancers dancing and you're more likely to attract attention.
5. Sponsor a book - autographing session. A fabric store could host a home-sewing author, a sporting goods outlet might invite an athlete who has written a book, a children's store could feature a cartoonist. Contact a book store or publisher to arrange to sell the authors books on your premises while the author is there.
6. Hold a wedding in your store or even in your parking lot. Unusual wedding ceremonies are always being featured in the media.
7. Sponsor a "travel theme" night at your business location by showing a video, or a slide presentation - have a guest lecturer who has travel to some exciting place. Liven up the evening with examples/samples of the food, clothing, art etc.
8. If you are involved in any endeavour that might profit from the clientele of senior citizens inquire at your local seniors center about presenting an education or entertaining program specifically designed for that sector of the market.
9. Plan a celebration for your 5,000 customer or other milestone.
10. Proclaim a special week devoted to whatever activity you choose by contacting your local government. In one city for example, the proprietor of a mystery bookstore convinced the mayor to issue a proclamation calling for a "Mystery Readers Week."

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11. Hold a contest that features children, such as a humorous photo competition or a baby race.
12. Host a cook-off and convince some local celebrities to act as judges.
13. Sponsor a health or safety seminar and offer CPR courses or other valuable information.
14. Consider off beat holiday promotions like conducting a gardening lesson on St. Patrick's Day for people who want a green thumb or decorating your shop for Christmas in July.
15. If you are seeking donations to support your activities stage a dramatic presentation showing how your efforts help people, then invite the media and the public to observe.
16. For the holiday of your choice, organize a decorated "Holiday House" to raise money for your favourite charity. Include a tea shop, a gift store and any other enticements the public might like, then notify the media of your plans.
17. Hold a fashion show with a theme, such as Dressing for the Slopes or Putting Pizzazz into pre-school wardrobes!
18. Arrange a public service tie in to your business. Some examples include conducting a blood donor clinic at your store, having a police officer available to fingerprint children or exhibiting the fire department's home safety devices.
19. Join together with other business owners in your area and arrange for a magician, a clown or musicians to entertain shoppers during a special promotion marketing a holiday or an anniversary.
20. Hold a draw for a free prize and send a photograph of the winner to your neighbourhood shopper paper.
21. Give a scholarship to an exceptional student in the name of your firm.
22. Mark a patriotic holiday by donating a flag to your town.
23. Present some needed equipment to a local library, school, senior center or recreation facility.
24. Offer to award a door prize at any large gathering in which you participate. Make sure your affiliation is mentioned.
25. If your hometown has a museum donate an artifact to it. But first make sure you set up an attention getting ceremony to mark the event.
26. Give away free samples of something related to your business.
27. Hold a draw for a free prize - the prize could be anything from one of your own products to free tickets to a sporting event. A free prize will undoubtedly draw public interest. Send the announcement of the winner to your community papers.

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List your top ten objectives for creating awareness.

Determine the top three to measure in the next 90 days.

Make play a part of your media recipe for success.

1. Play is the path to fun and profit. Recent studies conclude that people who have fun and feel fulfilled at work contribute 120% more to their jobs.
2. "Fun is the new status symbol." - Report on Business
3. "Non-stop work is for losers" - Report on Business Play is as important as work. The quality of our work suffers if we don't take the time to play. We live in a workaholic society in North America. Being addicted to busyness is a product of low self-worth.
4. Even God rested on the 7th day!
5. We need time to be idle. Taking time to do nothing lets problems incubate and allows for creativity to flow. Children who are allowed to daydream develop a higher IQ.
6. Play helps us find our genius. Our childhood passions are the key to our genius. In the midst of play we experience unlimited possibilities.
7. Play is crucial to attaining a work/life balance. A work/life balance (not money) is the number one concern of employees at all levels, in Canada and the U.S. The ability to achieve this is the top determinant in whether they are happy on the job, and whether they stay or leave.
8. The bow kept forever taut will break. - Zen saying Play helps us relax and let go. Play generates joy. Play replenishes and revitalizes our human spirit. It clears the mental cobwebs that keep us from thinking clearly.
9. Play is smart corporate strategy for solving problems. Play frees us from worry and stress, relaxing the brain and making it easier to be more creative. Solutions that seemed so evasive earlier now appear effortlessly in the midst of play.
10. Play keeps our passions alive in the workplace. Studies show, if you want to attract and keep talent, you need to have a fun, challenging and creative workplace environment. It's your talent that sets your business apart from the competition.

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Free Publicity Is Like Money In The Bank

It used to be said that a lady's name should only appear in the newspaper three times during her lifetime; when she was born, when she married, and when she died. This isn't the case with an organization like JobStart - the more times the organization is mentioned in the newspapers, the better, as long as the publicity is positive.

Positive publicity translates into more clients and that equates to increased sales; it's truly money in the bank. But to get this kind of publicity, the organization has to be newsworthy, and you have to blow your own horn.

Editors and reporters are looking for stories. That's what they do. If you want free publicity, you have to capitalize on events or actually create events that editors and reporters will find newsworthy.

For instance, the fact that JobStart has a new Executive Director isn't a story; it's just a change in leadership. If you want JobStart featured in the papers, you have to come up with the angles that make it a story. Capitalize on the programs that are the new ED's favourites, tie that information into increased economic development for the community.

An example of a good story - "over 1,000 foreign trained professionals have been matched with corporate Canada - 89% have gained Canadian experience and have found employment in their chosen field." This is a relevant and timely story - and you can quote Stats Canada on our immigration numbers. Now, you've got a story that the newspaper might be interested in - and possibly free publicity for JobStart.

Reporters and editors are busy people. They may not have the time to discover the story themselves. To make it work, you have to blow your own horn by letting them know all about it. Give the newspaper's business editor a call, or send the appropriate reporter a press release. Make sure that you give them plenty of lead-time, if your story is relevant to a particular date or time frame.

If you're hosting an event you can still benefit from increasing the JobStart profile in the community. You can do this by taking pictures, writing an article that covers the event - while making sure it is not self serving, it must have a local community interest story.

Many organizations and businesses, sponsor charity events, or contribute to non-profit, charitable organizations in their communities. These are good media opportunities. With JobStart consider everything from cleaning up a stream, through to working toward improving literacy in the community.

Offering the public free seminars or giving demonstrations also creates media interest. There are a lot of do-it-yourselfers that are part of the JobStart community; perhaps some would be interested in sharing their talents. If you have the appropriate facilities,

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this is a great way to increase awareness, and draw new business to the JobStart community while getting the organization featured in the newspapers.

There are all kinds of ways that you can bring JobStart to the attention of the community, but positive publicity is one of the most valuable ways to make this happen.

Make sure you delegate responsibility, and relegate enough time to generate the positive publicity that will add value and create awareness to JobStart.

PUBLICITY 101

How to do it without embarrassing yourself and others

Rule #1 about contacts: They change. Unless you're in pretty frequent communication with someone, don't assume that they're still there, or that they have the same focus. Big publications frequently rotate or reassign people. Small publications get a high degree of turnover. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't call the person on your list; you should. What you shouldn't do is send something to someone who hasn't been contacted for six months without making sure that they're there.

So you're planning to do a media blitz, and you're wondering how you know who to send it to. There are ways.

- Call the people on your list and see if they're still there.
- Call publications and ask who covers your industry, sector or topic.
- Buy magazines. Look at the masthead. It will tell you who the editors are.
- Update your own database frequently. Make a note of the date of all entries. Use your current contacts.
- Use media experts (Bowden's) or another industry reference (you can find them at your local library). Again, you have to verify contacts, but it will allow you to identify all magazines that might be interested in your sector, and it will help you find out which weekly newspapers have the circulation you are looking for.
- Most importantly, do research. Think about what you want to accomplish. Identify your audience. Go to a magazine stand. Pick up area publications when you travel.

Media -

You've identified the need to let people know about the organization. This is a great start. Before addressing the more important questions of who or why, let's talk about what: release, pitch letter, articles, kit, keen stuff in color or desk sets with the company logo.

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The Release: In all cases, you need one to tell people about a new product or service. It should be short, no more than two pages under any circumstances. It should have the contact information (name, phone number and maybe e-mail) either at the beginning or end; it's a matter of style and personal taste, and the only rule is that it's easy to find and read. It's good if the release is brilliantly crafted and fun to read, but that's a plus. At a minimum, it must be clear, present the basic information early on, and should contain pulled quotes so that someone doesn't have to bother calling if they're lazy. If you don't hold their interest in the first paragraph, you've probably lost them. It shouldn't be longer than it has to be, as editors get hundreds of releases a day, and it should be interesting enough to read. Finally, imagine how you'd feel if you saw 20 releases a day. Write accordingly, or hire a writer. People who write releases for a living get \$125-\$200 per release, on average, with \$500 per kit content design being pretty average, too.

The Pitch Letter: You need one of these, too. The release doesn't have to say everything, as the pitch letter can contain information, too. Think of the relationship between the release and letter like the relationship between a resume and cover letter: the one gives basic information, clearly stated, the other sets the tone, customizes the document, and gives additional information not necessarily appropriate in the main document.

The Kit: You don't need one if you can't explain why you do, and then you probably don't anyway. You need a kit if you have much more information/documents than the two mentioned above, if visuals will help sell the product, or if you think that you need to make a really big impression. As with the release, editors get hundreds a day. It should be short. It should have nothing unnecessary. To an editor, reading a kit is work. The more (and harder) the work, the less likely they are to do it. Each component should serve a function. In fact, it will help if you think of each piece as a modular component.

About articles: some people think that if you put them in a press kit, people won't cover you because they'll think it's been done. Others disagree. The bottom line is that if you're trying to get a client, investor or article about the company, load in the articles. If you're trying to get product-related press, add just a couple of good articles. I can't stress enough that short is good. If it's too long, it won't get read.

Why Bother?

Because one or all of the following conditions exist: The company needs increased exposure to grow and survive; you have a new service/product that won't sell/generate revenue without exposure; you have something press worthy, which could be the product or service you provide; you need a better press portfolio to show potential clients/investors.

Who Gets Them?

Who would be interested? Start with magazines that cover this type of story. Go on to newspapers; minimally, you should target your top 25 cities (go to the library if you're not sure what they are) and all editors who might be interested at those papers. Then if you

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still have time and energy, you can move on to general interest magazines, if they have an appropriate column. Keep in mind that even the beauty magazines have a high-tech editor. When you've finished with that, you might want to take a look at weekly entertainment papers around the country, the local equivalents to the Village Voice or The Boston Phoenix. There are still things you can do after that, but you probably shouldn't without a dedicated publicist; in fact, you probably won't even be able to complete the first two items on the list. However, other things you can do include radio call-ins, university newspapers, and WWW-based publicity. The latter includes everything from reregistering with search engines and with site-of-the day stuff to doing a comprehensive search of on-line publications and doing e-mailings. It's a targeted market and a good approach.

ALWAYS SEND A RELEASE, KIT OR E-MAIL TO YOURSELF, SO YOU KNOW WHEN THEY ARRIVE.

How to call people for information

This section is devoted to how to find out who is covering what. First, identify what you need to know. This may be as simple as knowing that you need the name of the editor. You need to be able to ask a simple question clearly without stumbling, so if you need a mailing address or the spelling of someone's name, be prepared to ask succinctly.

Next, get the number, if you don't have it. This can be easily accomplished by calling information (area code) 555-1212, or by using Bowden's or by surfing the Web; the choice is yours.

Finally, dial the number and ask. It might sound like this: Does Ed Speltzer still cover education and employment for your publication? If he does, can you please spell his last name and give me his email address? Don't forget to say "thank you". If the answer to your questions is no, find out who the editor is and be prepared to explain to the receptionist what you need in as few short words as possible.

How to respond to media call

- Return calls right away.
- Find out the name and publication of the person you're talking to. You can ask people to spell names or repeat questions, if needed.
- Find out if they have a deadline or not.
- Give them the information they ask for first. Anything additional is second.
- Find out if they have a run date for the article.
- Ask if there is a good time to call back and check with them on copies of the article.

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How to make a pitch

- It's always better to follow up than cold call. Translated, this means that it's much more effective to call about the kit/release that you sent than to call out of the blue.
- Speak quickly but clearly. People are pressed for time, and probably don't want to talk to you at all, so don't waste their time.
- Be prepared to elaborate.
- If they claim not to have received a kit, offer to send another.
- If they seem pressed for time, offer to call them back and ask what's a good time. Make sure you remember to call them at that time.
- Finally, it's feel and intuition, and it takes practice. Instincts are good, and usually can be trusted.

When to call

Call about a week to ten days after you mail materials. If you've sent your package by email follow up the next day. If you are trying to set up an interview for someone who is traveling, you must send the information 4 - 6 weeks before and call within a week. It's possible to do it in less time, but not desirable.

General information: *What to do and what to avoid*

- Know your media. Pick up a copy of the magazine or newspaper, if possible. Look through it. Who's their audience? Are they read only in a local areas or nationally? What's their average circulation? If you don't know the answers to these questions, you shouldn't be initiating phone calls.
- Get e-mail addresses when possible.
- Find out if a person prefers phone, fax, snail mail or e-mail.
- Try to be aware of when non-dailies go to press: if you keep calling the editor of a weekly as she is trying to put the publication through production, you'll make an enemy very rapidly.
- Be aware that for the most part, people don't want to talk to you. Take as little of an editor's time as possible. Elaborate if you have an opening, and only if you have an opening. Offer to call back if they're rushed or not paying attention.
- Be positive. Tell them what's good and interesting about your product or service. Whenever possible, talk about the parts you like most. You do the best job when you actually like what you're talking about.
- Try to have the information in front of you while you're talking about it.
- Do research. Find out as much as you can about the publication your talking/ mailing to, your competition, and your own product.
- Be friendly. Enthusiasm counts. Let the person you're talking to feel that you care about what you're telling them about, they you're sharing this swell thing with them.

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- Track clips as they come in. When possible, call and thank the writer.
- Don't hesitate to say "I'll get back to you" if you don't have an answer. Be sure to get back to the person quickly.
- Don't fax, unless the material really is of a timely nature or unless you know that someone prefers to receive faxed information.
- Don't repeat yourself. If you stumble over what you're saying, keep moving.
- Don't start what you can't finish. Every piece of mail sent without a follow-up, and preferably a decisive "yes" or "no" is time and money wasted.
- On average, it takes six months to make a real impact.
- Realistically, a full publicity campaign requires a bare minimum of one person doing it a half-time hours for at least three months; don't try to execute a campaign while you're responsible for delivering additional programs and services.

Various press options include the following:

- A simple, news-related release. Send out a release to industry sources.
- A very small, targeted mailing. The ED is vacationing in The Maritimes. Publicity thinks that the company needs press in the Atlantic provinces. You would send out generic kits to all media in the region, and follow up with phone calls.
- A larger campaign. You want to send information to the education and employment editors of the 50 largest papers in the country. Send to those editors only if you think you'll be able to call them. Don't send to the 100 largest papers if you think you can only call 25.
- A full campaign. This means both education and employment and other appropriate editors at top 50 - 100 newspapers, along with industry-specific magazines and publications, general magazines, entertainment magazines, online, weekly entertainment newspapers and maybe university newspapers.

The above all translates to the fact that it's better to do a small amount well than a large amount poorly, so do what you can, and then you can always do more.

Final points to remember

Expectations

Ask yourself what you want out of any particular publicity campaign. Then try to assess what's possible. It's better to know that you want to be on the cover of a national magazine than not having any clue as to what you'd like. Start small and measure your results. You can begin the climb once you've learned the basics and have mastered the art of publicity 101.