

27. A Word About Public Relations

You CAN get free media attention

Have you ever wondered how local businesses and business people manage to get articles written about them in the newspaper? Do they pay for this publicity? Do readers pay attention to what's written about them?

You bet people pay attention, and it's better than any paid advertisement. Depending on the slant of the story and the way it's written, the article can come across like a third party endorsement. So, how can you get this free publicity, too?

Look for PR Opportunities

- Business editors of local newspapers, magazines, radio, and television media, are always on the lookout for a worthy story. On the other hand, you're not the only one who is surprised to see an article about your business appear in a newspaper or on radio or television. Business editors and reporters receive dozens of press releases each day and obviously can't read them all.
- Business editors and reporters know how to write a commercial press release that will attract media attention. On the other hand, you may not know how to write a press release that the editor views as a possible item for his or her newspaper. If possible, for viewers, there is a chance that your material will be passed on to a business reporter.
- Generally speaking, the smaller the town the less local business news is reported. If you live in a small town, you are more apt to get an article in a small-town newspaper than you are in the New York Times.
- "So," you might think, "how newsworthy about a residential cleaning service business is going to write about it?" Well, little really. However, certain aspects of your business can be interesting to readers, and you can write to business editors who need to fill their paper's pages with news every single day. For example, readers might want to know about the fact that a new business has opened up in town. A press release that gives factual information about the lack of leisure time in today's dual-income families and a possible way of solving this increasing problem can be looked upon as worth some "ink" in a newspaper article. Environmental issues are "hot" today, and a residential cleaning

service which has faced these issues and responded to them by using only environment-friendly cleaning products is another possible angle.

- Using a PR strategy which includes a press release advising readers about the potential pitfalls of being responsible for legal and financial liabilities when hiring household helpers, including handling taxes, worker's compensation insurance, state and federal employment contributions, etc. can be an approach which may generate some media attention over a potential problem...which, of course, readers won't encounter when using a company like yours.

- "Human interest" stories also tend to interest reporters as well. Therefore, if you have some achievement, either as a result of your work in your community or some other form of recognition, you may be able to obtain some notice from the press.

- Even a simple press release announcing that you are sponsoring a town seminar "to learn more about how to improve your business" can rate a few lines of mention in the community newspaper.

- **The advantage of public relations is that it amounts to what is virtually a "free" advertisement for you and your business.** It is a means of increasing general awareness to the public about your business in your market. Often, the amount of money that would be required to buy a newspaper could cost hundreds of times more than what you would pay for a paid advertisement.

It is an advance that you can't rely on getting PR since the newspaper may not want to run the press release, let alone print an article about it. Furthermore, PR is a seldom-happening occurrence and reporters who do PR usually come to fruition only infrequently.

- You should always be on the lookout for Public Relations opportunities and take advantage of those opportunities when they present themselves. The benefits can be immeasurable, and carrying around a copy of a newspaper about you and your business when you go on company appointments can have a very positive influence on potential clients.

When writing out any press release, always contact the various local newspapers to obtain the name of the business editor of each paper. Alternately, you can scan the newspapers and note the names of the business reporters credited with writing various business-related articles, or note the name of writers who contribute household-tip columns in the women's section. You should also be able to obtain

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this information on the Internet. Your press release should be mailed in an envelope addressed to one of the above.

- Press releases should always be typed using double spacing and typed on one side of the paper only. If the release is longer than one page, use only one "banner page" and type the following on "page two" paper. Always proof read your press release three times checking for spelling and typographical errors.
- *Note: Do not mail out any press releases until you are knowledgeable about the business to conduct an interview. Have a conversation with a reporter who may be interested to conduct a follow up interview. Very often, before printing a story about the business, the media will contact you to confirm facts and verify the information. It is a good idea to wait 60 to 90 days from the completion of the operation before attempting to generate PR efforts.*

Helping Others is Great for Them and Good for Business



Founded in 2006 by Debbie Sardone, owner of Buckets & Bows Cleaning Service in Lewisville, Texas, Cleaning for a Reason is non-profit organization consisting of hundreds of member cleaning companies in almost every state in the U.S. Members provide FREE cleaning services to women undergoing cancer treatment. It is a wonderful cause and having your company become a participating chapter is something you will want to consider.

Philanthropic issues aside, the Biblical phrase "*As you sow, so shall you reap*" has certainly proven to be the case for member companies of *Cleaning for a Reason*. The project has been receiving media attention from television, radio stations and newspapers all across America, Canada and Australia. Just **Google CLEANING FOR A REASON** and you'll see scores of articles about the cause and its participating member cleaning companies.

You couldn't buy this kind of publicity. More importantly, participating members tell us that the response and appreciation they receive from their cancer patient clients is worth far more than the public goodwill they achieve in their communities.

For more information on the organization, its mission and how you can participate, please visit:

<http://www.cleaningforareason.org>