

Marketing Tips: PR for Small Businesses



- ✓ **Make sure your product or service is ready.** This is your immediate priority before you even start to think about PR! You need to make sure your product is ready for public consumption -get it out, make sure it works and does something that people care about. As PR drives customer demand, if the product is not available to buy when the coverage appears, you'll be missing out on sales, or even worse, driving customers to your competitors!
- ✓ **Know your market.** Successful PR is all about reaching the right audience with a message that is appropriate and meaningful to them. If you fail to know your target audience and the publications that they read, implementing the rest of your PR actions is useless. There is no point aiming for the Financial Times when your customers read The Sun.
- ✓ **Learn about the media outlet before you contact them.** In defining your target audience, you will also know what they read, what radio programmes they listen to, what TV programmes they watch and what websites they visit. Take your time to educate yourself about the media outlets you are targeting. You need an idea of the type of story to present.
- ✓ **Your message.** The centre of your PR campaign is your message. Make sure it's clear, concise and brief. If your message isn't summed up in a few sentences, editors won't read it. You also need to focus the materials you send to help the editors or producers. This means anticipating and answering their questions and labeling photographs.
- ✓ **Getting media coverage.** Getting newspaper coverage or a mention of your new product or service can go a long way towards creating a buzz. Target both the local and national press as well as your industry's trade publications. Often, the coverage you get in a trade publication will create the biggest buzz, as it's read by all of your competitors and investors. The best way to get media coverage is to gauge the types of stories that are hot -current events, breaking news, the latest scandals -and tie your business in with them. Every journalist is looking for a different spin on the story of the day. Think of presenting your story with a fresh angle; consider using a human interest link.
- ✓ **Develop a relationship with and use the local media.** Your relationship with journalists is very important and is the basis of your interaction with the media. These relationships take time to develop. Read the local publications and get the names of the journalists who cover your specific topic. Check out the online version of the publication and search for articles by those journalists. Give them a call and introduce yourself. When your business gets a significant new customer, moves from your home to a real office, wins a community award or takes on a new employee, don't hesitate to call an appropriate journalist. You may not always get coverage, but you have nothing to lose by cultivating these relationships.



- ✓ **Write a feature article.** Write an article for your local newspaper or trade publication on a subject that relates to you or your business. If the article is well written and is specifically targeted to the readers of that publication, it could bring you the publicity you seek.
- ✓ **Start a blog.** With a blog, similar to an online diary, you can position your business in the eyes of your customers, your industry and the press. You may be seen as a leading authority in the industry and allows you to engage with your customers and potential partners. Blogs also bring in more visitors to your website.
- ✓ **Public Speaking.** Give talks or teach classes about your profession or business to local groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, or trade shows, roundtables and conferences.
- ✓ **Persistence.** This is the single most important factor when it comes to making your PR campaign a success. If you have a good plan, and devote enough time and energy to carrying it out, you will obtain a great deal of positive publicity for your business -at very little cost.