

[PR Can Be a Useful Tool for Small Business Owners](#)

While Lewis Green has a point in his recent post, "On PR: Not the First Strategy of Small Business," there are areas where he is incorrect.

The fact is that any business owner is in two businesses: (1) the business of the product or service they offer, and (2) marketing & selling the product or service they offer. This is where PR comes in, even for a small company. PR - or public relations - is, as Green points out, a facet of marketing. So is advertising. And, given the choice between spending marketing \$\$ on PR or on advertising, for a small business owner, the better choice is PR, by far.

Sure, a massive PR campaign with guaranteed placement and coverage in three or four different media vehicles will cost you a pretty penny. But it doesn't have to cost a million dollars to begin a small, successful PR campaign. If you write them well and in the proper format, it IS possible for your media releases to generate interest, buzz, and coverage. Two important things to remember about getting your story picked up are being consistent and creating relationships with the reporters, columnists, talk show hosts, and others in the media.

Be consistent - but don't be a pest. Make sure that even if your stories don't get picked up the first handful of times, the reporters and editors you are targeting are consistently seeing your name and details about your business and/or activities.

Create relationships with members of the media. Remember, they're people, too. So call them up. Let them know you have expertise in their subject. Make yourself available. Ask how you can help them. They're not inaccessible, and they're not ogres. As long as you are respectful of their time, and aren't constantly calling or sending releases about little Johnny's first-grade spelling bee win or Aunt Hilda's prize-winning rutabegas, they will want to talk with you. Why? Because they need content!

Sports and the hard news sections of any paper or segments of any TV news broadcast are the primary places where news occurs as it happens. In virtually every other area, stories and reports have to be researched and written ahead of time. Reporters are constantly on the lookout for good story ideas. If you have one, do yourself and your favorite reporter a favor - share it with them!

And even if you don't have a whole lot of initial success in getting your story picked up by the media, you can always write your own piece and submit it to a smaller newspaper or journal. Either way (they write about you or you author your own piece), you are creating what is known as a third-party endorsement. That means that an independent entity is vouching for you.

If you spend money to run an ad, anyone who reads the ad knows that you paid for it. And unless it's a truly spectacular piece of work, has an unbelievable can't-miss offer, or hits the reader at precisely the right time, its chances of success in a single appearance are slim. However, with the single appearance of an article or news story, the organization who runs the piece validates you as newsworthy by running it; even if you write your own article, you're still validated because they thought your piece was good enough to put in their publication. And, with stories you author yourself, you almost always get a resource box at the end, which contains a very short bio and your contact information.

Once you write a release, use it! Beyond simply submitting your media release to the local media, think broader. Are there specialty journals or magazines related to your field? Are there regional or national publications you can submit to? Have you considered purchasing distribution through a source like PR Web? And if you've written your own article, don't forget to post it online. Use a service like Article Marketer to get your story scattered across the Internet. These are low-cost tools that can really pay off in huge PR returns, if your work is well-written and well-edited to begin with.

So, yes. A BIG, glitzy, pull-out-all-the-stops media campaign is probably beyond the budget of most small businesses. But there's no reason you cannot make a smaller, systematized PR and marketing campaign work very effectively for you.

In the Phoenix market, one woman has done a remarkable job on her own PR. After scoring 300+ media appearances on her own (no PR firm involved) in her first 6 years in business, Eileen Proctor of It's a Ruff Life Dog Daycare is now making a living teaching others how to create media relationships that guarantee publicity. And as the NLP folks teach us, if someone else can do it, we can too. All we need to do is study what they've done, and then copy or adapt it, as necessary.

PR does work. Use it - and watch your business skyrocket.

About the Author

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