

Low-Cost Ways to Generate High-Price Publicity

By Nancy Michaels

Top 10 Takeaway Tips

1. The differences between advertising and publicity are many. In short, you pay for advertising and you pray for publicity, but not entirely. You have much more control when you purchase an ad in a newspaper or other media outlet, however, the consumer knows the difference between a paid ad and editorial content whereby an "objective" source feels you, your story or your business are truly compelling enough to write about. Advertising will cost you money. Publicity will cost you sweat equity.
2. When pitching yourself to the media, be sure to put yourself in their shoes. Why would you or your business be newsworthy to write about at this time? Do you other sources to give the reporter to better round out the story? Have you done your homework and know what "beat" they cover and they are the ideal person to pitch this story to?
3. In addition to keeping a folder of media contacts or reporters/editors whose topic area relates to you and your business and whose style you like, there are directories that can be found at the reference section of your local library such as Bacon's Publicity Checker. Almost all industry trade associations have publications as well. If your business is local, offer to take the editor of your local newspaper out to lunch and ask him or her what kinds of stories he/she is interested in. Offer names of others who have interesting businesses or could be good resources as well.
4. It's wise to not pitch yourself to two competing media outlets at the same time—this is especially so with print media. In Boston, for instance, we have two newspapers: The Boston Globe and The Boston Herald. If the Herald runs a story about you or your business and an editor at the Globe was considering doing the same, you lessen your chances that they would write about you if they've just seen you in The Herald.

5. Think about how your business ties in with current events such as the economy, so that you can make a compelling case that your idea is timely, relevant and necessary for audiences to hear about. There are some topics that are "evergreen" as well, such as money, children, green movement, etc. If your business can tie in with what's currently in the news, you increase your chances of obtaining publicity.
6. Creating a press kit helps make the reporter's job much easier by providing information they may want to include in their story. It also gives you more control by directing the content you provide them with. A biography should be written in the third-person and be a glowing testament of who you are, your uniqueness and storyline about your business. A press release is written when making an announcement about a timely event, or other announcement you'd like to make about your business. Go online to research the template of a press release, which should always include the 5 W's—who, what, where, when and why—in the first paragraph.
7. If you don't have a professional headshot of yourself, ask for recommendations of professional photographers who can take your photo. This will be more important when you are writing an article for a newspaper and will include your byline—a description of who you are, your business and contact information for people to follow-up with you.
8. Always suggest to a media outlet that they come to your office, home, etc. to take photographs, as action shots are more natural and are better able to "tell a story" and oftentimes media outlets have in-house photographers who would be happy to come to you to photograph you. You might also be able to purchase these photographs for future use with their permission.
9. You must follow-up with the media and do not take a "no" personally. They are on strict deadlines and are in need of people like you and me to provide them with ideas and content. The key is in following up with them to ensure they received the materials you sent them, if they need additional information or resources, etc. Do NOT call them on a day that is their deadline (weekly papers

especially). Also, make sure to ask them how they would prefer to be communicated with—via e-mail, texting, faxes or postal deliveries. Electronic correspondence is usually preferred, however, some will not accept attachments, etc.

10. Always write a hand-written thank you note to the media—as so few people do—you will stand out.

Bonus Tip:

Leverage your publicity by sending the link out to your online newsletter followers, reprint it and hang it up in your office, post it to your web site, create a direct mail piece and send it to your "A" list clients. If the people who you want to see your publicity don't live in your town, or missed the newspaper that day, it's your job to reprint your publicity and spread the word.

About Nancy Michaels



Nancy Michaels is CEO and Founder of Grow Your Business Network, Inc., a company devoted to empowering business owners around the world with the strategies to live a financially secure life of their dreams. Her expert opinion is sought after and has been profiled by Inc.com where she is the solo-preneur expert, Entrepreneur Magazine's Marketing Expert, Success Magazine, Fortune Small Business, and The New York Post. In addition, her sales and marketing advice has been featured on CNNFn, The Weekend Today Show and Fox News.