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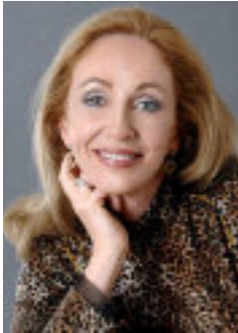
ATTRACTING PUBLICITY



> *Be a Media Magnet*

MEET THE “HUNGRY TO SUCCEED” TEAM

Tricia Ryan: Author



Tricia is a registered dietician with an MBA, which probably explains her love of healthy cooking and marketing. She has spent much of her career building brands for online and offline businesses in the food, beverage, OTC drug, financial and hospitality industries. Tricia is renowned for her research and problem-solving skills, and has parlayed this strength to launch a variety of products for Berry Health, Boots Healthcare and Wrigley Canada. In the last few years, Tricia has applied her extensive communications expertise into the online world.

On a food note, Tricia has probably taken more cooking classes than Julia Child and Jamie Kennedy combined. In fact, she has a legion of friends who would commit a criminal act just for an invitation to one of her famous dinner parties.

Mark Fodchuk: Author



A proud carnivore who has never eaten tofu, Mark came into advertising by way of teaching English and moonlighting as a greeting card writer. Instead of marking papers, he wanted to write beer ads, so he quit teaching and joined MacLaren Advertising where he honed his skills and crafted campaigns for Molson, Esso and GE, to name a few.

Mark's career is characterized by campaigns that earned significant results for both agencies and clients. Print, online, direct response, radio—you name it, he's written it during his 20 years as an award-winning copywriter.

Cooking-wise, Mark's greatest satisfaction came from his stint as a cooking instructor for grade nine high school students. Class attendance shot up, as students eagerly showed up for learning the finer points of making pesto, grilling tuna and charring peppers for a zesty summer salsa.

Bernard Romano: Designer



Born in Italy and raised in Australia (which explains his love of certain cheeses and the barbie), Bernard is a cosmopolitan art director with more than 20 years experience in design and advertising. An art director with some of Canada's most respected agencies, Bernard has won just about every creative award in the book. Bernard brings a keen sense of design and a thorough understanding of what it takes to motivate people through the communication process.

When it comes to cooking, Bernard likes to eat.

Inside Secrets to Get Free Media Publicity for Your Business, Organization and Yourself

Ever notice how some individuals and organizations have a knack for getting their names in the news? The media spotlight loves them.

Even on a local level, certain businesses appear to have a steady supply of “good news stories” that garner media attention, and of course, get the public talking—and taking action.

Coincidental? Hardly.

So how do you attract this type of public attention for yourself and your enterprise? Without significantly adding to your marketing costs. Or without the need to hire a public relations firm, even if on a retainer.

That’s the information discussed in this section of the workbook. Regardless of your business, budget or background, with the proper knowledge and right publicity tools, anyone can be a media magnet. Once you understand what it takes to create publicity, especially the free kind, you’ll forever be on the lookout for interesting ways to create, pitch and develop ideas into a positive story for your product, service and organization.

In this section, we guide you through the 4-step publicity process: what to publicize, how to publicize, where to publicize and when to publicize.

You’ll learn which activities attract the most attention, how to communicate with the media and when to build on previous publicity.

Finally, we cover the ingredients that go into the making of a professional press release, as well as tips on to handle a media interview.

Profit from the subtle art of media publicity

The art of publicity is to get a third-party—the print, broadcast and Internet media—to write or talk about your product or service in a favorable manner, without any real costs to you. It’s amazing how a simple endorsement from a reporter, beat editor, radio personality, columnist or even an unbiased blogger—carries clout in a way that paid advertising cannot.

In the online world, you can double, triple or quadruple your publicity quotient by having “your story” picked up and distributed in newsletters, e-zines and PR websites, as well as having it discussed on blogs, webcasts and social networking sites.

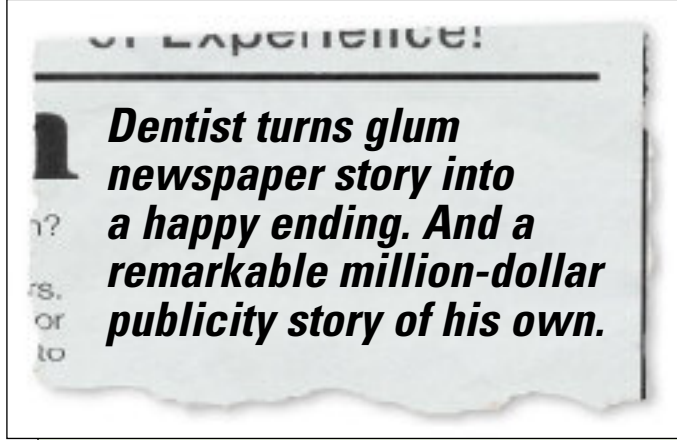


MARKETING TIP:

“Popular blogs can be as influential as many print publications, but pitching a blogger requires a careful approach. Unlike print publications, blogs have no editorial calendar, so it’s important to read previous posts and become familiar with the subject matter covered.”

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The trick, of course, is to give media people a “hook” to make your story “newsy.” Keep in mind, their job is NOT to hype you or your business. Their job is to inform, educate and entertain their audience, and if you can give them an angle or a twist that makes their job easier, you’ve got a better chance at getting an interview or a mentionable article or story. Yes, it’s often easier said than done, but there are certain things you can do to make your product or service interesting and newsworthy.



In 2007 the Toronto Star (Canada’s largest daily newspaper) wrote a major story on the War on Poverty. The story highlighted the lack of affordable dental care for low-income people in Ontario and featured Jason Jones, a young 25 year old who lost all but four teeth because he was poor and could not afford dental care.

The front-page story described how the young man became an oddity, as his empty, elderly cheeks limited his ability to find work and express his naturally positive nature.

The touching story prompts a huge response from readers, including a call from a local dentist Dr. Raj Singh who, without hesitation, offers to give the young man free dentures and dental implants.

Six months later Jason Jones and his new smile grace the front page again, thanks to Dr. Singh and his staff who are all featured on the front page as well. It makes for one of the most heart-warming stories of the year. The resulting publicity for Dr. Singh and his office is phenomenal, with the story and photos flashed across the country and the world via the Internet. The example shows how easy it is to make a story yours if your ears are tuned, your radar on and your heart big. That’s what public relations is all about.

By the way, Dr. Singh is today so busy, it’s hard to book an appointment. All because his kind gesture turned a human-interest story into the biggest publicity coup of his career.

ACTION PLAN: *Keep your eyes (and ears) open to stories and trends in the news. Then figure out how you can participate or help in some way. Reporters, in particular, love when the public or a business gets behind their story. It’s a great way to develop a media relationship and you’re sure to get a responsive ear when you update what you’ve done to help. In a case like this, the resulting publicity gathers steam and becomes a media story on its own.*

Why Every Business Needs Publicity

Everyone in business faces two obstacles to success: getting noticed and turning a profit. One must come before the other.

Whatever your product or service, whether you're opening a sports injury clinic, running a gift basket service from your home or seeking to promote your town's annual rib-fest, you must first attract attention to prosper.

Publicity certainly can help. It can increase your business recognition, draw attention to your website, enhance your positive image or reverse a negative image, as certain oil companies have found. Publicity can provide the spark you need to ignite action. In a crowded field, it allows you to stand apart. And it may be the competitive edge you need. If you're seeking to make a name for your business or yourself, publicity is the way to do it.

Just ask Donald Trump.

The Purpose of Publicity

If you're thinking about adding publicity to your promotional mix, you're smart. Entrepreneurs who understand publicity know its major goals are to stimulate business activity, increase profits and build public awareness of a product or service, individual, organization or cause. With sensible planning, publicity can accomplish a number of other objectives, some short-term, some long-term:

- Increase your visibility
- Create interest in an event you're sponsoring
- Give you and your company recognition and credibility
- Attract new clients or new members
- Increase profits at a relatively low cost
- Turn a hobby into a business
- Establish a new image to replace an old one
- Get a new venture off the ground
- Generate good will
- Boost employee morale



COOKING TIP:

A roast with the bone in will cook faster than a boneless roast.

The reason?

The bone carries the heat to the inside of the roast quicker.

Advantages of publicity over traditional paid advertising

Advertising with publicity enhances the credibility of your marketing message. Publicity is usually timed first, so when people later see your print or online banner ads or hear your commercials, they pay more attention and your messaging gets an added boost.

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While publicity and paid-for advertising usually work best in tandem, publicity does have certain advantages:

1. Less expensive:

Advertising and publicity both make use of the media to reach the public, but publicity costs are considerably less. Unlike advertising where companies must pay for time and space, publicity is virtually free. In most cases, your publicity costs will be your time to write news releases (or paying someone to write them for you) your letterhead and postage expenses to mail announcements, and your distribution fees for popular online PR websites.

Of course, if you hire a PR firm, you'll pay an hourly rate or retainer fee, but most small businesses don't go this route until they're in a bigger league.

2. Size of audience:

With publicity you can tell your story to thousands of current and potential customers, perhaps millions, if mass media picks up your release. (You might even capture a new untapped audience.) And in the age of the Internet, your publicity story can go viral, and find an audience around the world.

That said, especially on a local level, it's often faster and more immediate to address your press release to a specific individual—a reporter, producer or beat editor who might be interested in your activity. Once you've established a rapport with local media, you're more apt to get repeat exposure. Publicity works this way.



MARKETING TIP:

"An interview is not meant to be free advertising. When you're questioned, resist the temptation to push your product. Interviewers dislike hard sell. Let the interviewer mention your product and you'll gain credibility."

3. Instant credibility:

You'll notice a remarkable transformation when your name is announced over the radio, or your face is on the six o'clock news, or your article is mentioned on a blog or you're quoted in a newspaper story. Suddenly the public perceives you as an expert. Your credibility shoots up. Unlike with paid advertising, media publicity is usually viewed as unbiased, and as an implied endorsement for your product, service or cause.

After all, if the media is credible, so must be the news they report. Like yours.

4. High impact:

Much like a word-of-mouth recommendation from a friend, publicity is also an extremely persuasive marketing tool. Publicity can sway public opinion; improve personal images or reverse negative attitudes. For example, publishers send out free books to critics in the hope of getting positive reviews for their authors. Movie studios do much the same, and send actors on publicity tours to talk up their films.

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Even a well-timed letter to an editor about current issues can be a persuasive but subtle publicity ploy. Because of its implied media endorsement, publicity can have a longer-lasting impact than paid advertising.

5. Versatility:

Publicity is flexible because it can place you or your business in the spotlight on your terms—almost anytime and any place you choose. By availing yourself to new media opportunities—for example, in delivering a teleseminar, signing up as an industry expert (www.expertclick.com) or participating in a web forum, you can expand new markets or launch a new business or a new career.

6. Longevity:

Publicity is like a tattoo—the media ink you get offers you a permanent record of your accomplishment. Once you've been mentioned in media, even once, you can use the video clip, the sound bite or the press clipping to further your cause.

Add these public records to your marketing materials and website to stimulate more business, woo potential clients, or as a means to garner more publicity. Think about it—why will a restaurant take a food critic review and reprint it on their website or laminate it and place it in their display window, even though the review may be years old and faded with age? Because good publicity delivers positive repercussions for a long time.

Summary: why publicity is so highly regarded

- It's less expensive than paying for advertising
- It offers higher results for your marketing dollar
- It's an "implied endorsement" from the influential and respected media, which gives you instant credibility
- It gives you exposure to your target audience and potential audiences you may not even know about
- It can directly lead to inquiries and sales
- It can create interest in a one-time event you're sponsoring
- It's a key way to drive traffic to your website, and as such, is a great way to boost your ratings and page rank
- It's a morale booster to have your name or company in the public eye



COOKING TIP:

Add a little lemon and lime to tuna to add zest and flavor to tuna sandwiches. Also, try using a bit of mustard instead of mayo to cut the fat and add a tang.

Is publicity really free?

Until now we've said that publicity is free, unlike advertising where companies must pay for time and media space. Publicity is free, sort of. Yes, you can create a news release and if it attracts the attention of a reporter or editor, you might be interviewed or have your story written up or mentioned for free in the local paper or trade magazine or e-zine newsletter.

But, as many businesses confirm, you stand a better chance of having your story "picked up" if you already pay for advertising in that particular medium. Editors are known to say "we'll give them a freebie mention after they pay for another ad." Ouch. That's reality.

Here's another reality bite. Not all publicity efforts will guarantee a media pick-up, or even a mention of your name or business, IF the media is not interested. (Your story may be tucked away for use another time.) Don't be discouraged. Learn from your no-responses. Even paid advertising is no guarantee of results, either.

On the positive side, the media, especially smaller community newspapers and trade journals, are always hungry for story ideas and activities with a local twist or industry-specific slant. Often a cover "pitch" letter and an interesting press release to a specific media person is all that's needed to get the ball rolling.

Start local, see what works, and move up the media ladder. Getting an Oprah-mention takes a bit of publicity practice.

***Tip: How to get maximum return
on a single news release:***

"Write one release to a prime target, then shop it around. One on-topic, on-target release can go farther than yet another e-mail blast, because journalists always want new exclusive ideas."

***Mitchell P. Davis,
publisher,
Yearbook of Experts***

Why it pays to include pay-for PR websites

While publicity, by its very nature is free, you can pay to have your news releases posted online through paid distribution sites. (Plenty of free distribution PR sites also exist, but you may find them NOT as effective as paying sites. They still are worth your consideration, if only to get more mileage out of your publicity efforts. These sites are noted in our resource section.)

Our two favorite pay-for sites are **PRWeb.com**, especially if you're posting fewer than 10 releases a year, and **www.ExpertClick.com** The Online Yearbook of Experts. An Expertclick subscription lets you post up to 52 press releases a year with no additional per-releases charges. It also places you into its online database of experts, which journalists search frequently.

Start a viral poll or survey

When the city of Dallas, Texas (Home of the Dallas Cowboys) considered renaming its football stadium, Mike, an online entrepreneur, decided to quickly build a website to conduct a poll. The website allowed Dallas residents to vote on questions related to this local issue - such as: "Do you want the name of the stadium to change?"

Mike sent a news release to the Dallas-area media (newspapers, radio and television stations, etc.) about this new website where people could go and vote on this important issue.

RESULTS:

The website received substantial publicity from the local media and the news spread via word-of-mouth. In just 10 days Mike received over 100,000 visitors to his site, added 50,000 new opt-in subscribers to his email list, and sold more products, as he says, "like crazy."



You may not realize it, but you're an expert in demand

Think you're not an expert? Yes you are. If you're in business, or have a hobby, you undoubtedly have a skill or an area of expertise with background information that some journalist or editor needs. Whether it's via a phone call or an email, you are a source, and somebody worthy of an interview or a quotation. And if you've been interviewed or quoted more than once, you're probably perceived as an uber-expert.

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Fact is, most reporters today rely on online sites such as www.PRWeb.com or www.ExpertClick.com for searching stories. If they need information on a topic, they'll scan the PR headlines or subject areas or experts to find a release or a person that can satisfy their journalistic needs.

In the end, publicity, however you get it, is about getting the media to buy a strategic message—your story. Start by giving your publicity story appetite appeal.

Sometimes it's necessary to build promotional values into your product. Publicity can help that along. Not many people were comfortable eating Horse Mackerel sandwiches until a brilliant PR person started a campaign and called it tuna fish. Soon after, Charlie the Tuna was born. Wonders, what a name change can do. And keep in mind, when Marion Morrison changed his name to John Wayne, his "brand" suddenly took off like a wild horse.

Where to find opportunities for publicity

There's no secret formula to generating publicity in the media. For the most part, it's an easy two-step process. First, create or plan a noteworthy event or activity, and second, notify the media of your activity or accomplishment.

Simple, right?

The real secret is to find those activities that not only draw public attention, but activities that draw the attention of those in the print, broadcast and Internet media. It's not that difficult.

Find out what the media want

To receive publicity you need the media. But what does the media want from you? Think like a journalist. Or an editor/producer in the media outlet you want your story to appear. What types of events or actions invite a further investigation from them? What types of activities displease the media? (Bet you know this one.)



MARKETING TIP:
"Beware of jargon. While a limited amount of jargon may be required if your goal is to optimize your news release for online search engines, the best way to communicate your news is to speak plainly, using ordinary language. What does "capacity planning techniques" mean?"

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Here's a quick guide to acceptable practices to keep in mind.

1. Inform. Amuse. Educate. Entertain.

To earn media publicity, your activity must be newsy, of course. And interesting, not just to the media but also to their readers, listeners and viewers. Offline reporters and story editors always need new material to fill in their pages or hours of broadcast time. Online journalists and bloggers constantly seek fresh content to feed their websites and blogs and ezines and newsletters each day. But that content must inform, educate or entertain their audience in some way.



Google is a young company that has not spent money to advertise its brand name. Google's growth has come entirely from word-of-mouth, as satisfied users tell their friends, and others learn about it through the media and online. Now that's the epitome of good publicity.

So, before you undertake any promotional activity, ensure it has a story element that informs or entertains. Or both. If it doesn't, you may have to change your approach. And even if you have an entertaining hook, if you're promoting the same event again and again, you'll have to find a fresh twist of some sort. The press (and people) weary fast.

But take heart, consider how many "easy hamburger dinner" recipes you see every month in food magazines. They may seem similar. But all it takes is one new spice or ingredient and wow, you've got a new cover story and the makings of a whole eating experience.

Apply that knowledge to your recurring publicity activities.

2. No hype. No hard sell. No me-me.

Remember, publicity is not advertising. Comparatively, publicity whispers, advertising shouts. As far as the media is concerned, the guaranteed way to doom any activity from getting publicity is to include an obvious sales pitch in your press release. Again, think like a journalist and remember the needs of their readers, listeners and viewers.

Strive for journalistic merit and tie-in your press release with the buzz of a real news story or a current trend you've been hearing about. Better yet, give your promotional activity a warm human-interest angle that the audience might sympathize with. Forget self-serving, and the spoils will come to you.



COOKING TIP:

Sunlight doesn't ripen tomatoes, warmth does. Store tomatoes with stems pointed down and they will stay fresher, longer.

Publicity campaign on YouTube earns Hollywood call for actor, and major recognition and sales increase for sponsor



Bride Has Massive Hair Wig-Out:

One of our favorite publicity stories involves an amateur video recording about a bad hair meltdown posted on YouTube in 2007. In the six-minute clip, a young woman enters a hotel room filled with bridesmaids and complains of her bad haircut, an hour before her wedding. Then, in a burst of anger, the bride-to-be takes a pair of scissors and begins furiously cutting off her hair -- repeatedly telling the camera operator to stop filming.

It's not obvious that the video is a dramatization, nor that it's affiliated with any organization.

As it turns out, the video of the screaming bride-to-be with the awful haircut was actually spearheaded by Sunsilk Canada, a major hair product company. This fact only came to light only a few days later, when bloggers started asking questions. In fact, the hair product company planned the publicity campaign this way—and it worked much better than any expectation.

Results:

*The inexpensively shot video became an overnight hit and has been viewed by more than 3 million people and counting. The resulting media pick-up earned the video-maker Ingrid Hass and the actress Jodi Behan both instant notoriety and calls from Hollywood, which was their intention. Even famed director Norman Jewison was quoted as saying he'd hire the aspiring actress. The clip made it on NBC's *The Today Show* and earned the actors interviews on *Good Morning America* and as well as requests to appear on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno.*

And the sponsor, Sunsilk, noticed a huge up-tick in visits to its website, increased sales and dozens of requests for interviews from the print, broadcast and Internet media. The point is this: the stunt was entertaining, without any sales pitch at all. What kind of viral publicity campaign can you create for your product or service?

3. Local angle. National slant. Universal subject.

Whether it's print, radio, television or online, each media channel is only interested in material that relates to their specific niche of readers, listeners or viewers. Shape your story around satisfying the needs of that particular audience. A shotgun strategy that tries to satisfy everyone may not be effective at getting you the pick-up you desire. In fact, it may reduce your chances of getting media publicity, because many journalists and producers look for "exclusive" stories.

ATTRACTING PUBLICITY

Generally speaking, a nationwide TV program is apt to present stories with a national slant while a community paper is usually focused on local activities. The Internet, on the other hand, tends to be organized by topic, rather than region. Use your activity to take advantage of the media and its audience.

It's easy to become an opportunist

If you want publicity, put away your timidity. Become an opportunist. Be open-minded and keep your radar on. You cannot sit back and hope for something to happen. Take charge and become pro-active in your business life.

It doesn't mean you have to single-handedly develop a new fat-busting diet based on fresh-water mollusks or invent a bean-powered car. But it does mean that when you're trying to attract media coverage, you need a spark to get things ignited. (Bean-car, hmm.)

It's easy to become an opportunist when you're aware of what's happening in your community, your own area of interest and in the mass media. Capitalize on those events and make news from those stories.



MARKETING TIP:

"Contact every local organization and find out how to get your name listed as a community resource in their phone and web directories. The media frequently uses these guides as sources for interviews."

Here are a few ways for making news:

1. Jump on the bandwagon of a current trend.

Follow blogs, magazines and talk shows for the latest buzz on food fads, fashion styles and fitness stories. Keep your eyes and ears open to what health issue Dr. Phil is chatting about and what ecological, travel or business-related trend is grabbing time on the six-o'clock news. Then find a way to translate that story into an opportunity to gain publicity for your business.

Another bachelor/bachelorette TV season starting? If you run a pub or bar, start an online survey to vote for the best "pick-up" line and post the results on your website. (Go viral and be sure to collect email addresses.) Set up an evening to bring in a few local models to meet and greet and to announce the winning phrases. Invite the entertainment media and "prospects" from your new batch of email names—and let the fun begin.

Got a retail storefront? Decorate your display window to coincide with a scientific or environmental story in the news. When Knut, the German baby polar bear, made worldwide headline news, we saw department stores, fashion boutiques and toy stores dressing up window displays with cute polar bears. (A few years ago, similar media hoopla occurred with the arrival of Dolly, the first cloned sheep. Imagine the media publicity you'd generate if you brought in a real baby lamb to mark the arrival of your winter collection of wool coats.)

ATTRACTING PUBLICITY

Run a camping backpack store? Call the zoo and see if you can rent a kangaroo for an afternoon. Guaranteed publicity for your “pouch” story.

Celebrating a 40th anniversary of your business or service? Dress your staff in bandanas and tie-dyed shirts, crank up the Jefferson Airplane tunes and send incense sticks in a press kit to the local media. Cool, man.

If an upcoming movie or play is getting a lot of advance press, tie in your product or service to the themes related to the show. When the Sweeney Todd musical drama about a mad barber living in London during the 1800s opened in Toronto, a local hair salon took advantage of the critical buzz. Mynt Hair Studio www.mynthairstudio.com promoted its own grand opening with a contest to win a pair of tickets to the acclaimed show. A bloody good idea.



Ride the coattails of the latest Oprah and “Entertainment Tonight” themes

If you want the scoop on the latest water-cooler buzz, simply pay attention to media shows headed up by the likes of Oprah, Ellen, Martha, Jay, David and our fav, Jim Cramer, to name a few of the more popular names. When these talk celebrities spot a hot story or trend, it’s a safe bet the rest of the media will pay attention, especially if your “hook” relates to the latest buzz in some way.

That’s what publicity is about—the latest “thing”, whatever that is.



COOKING TIP:

Let raw potatoes stand in cold water for at least half an hour before frying to improve the crispness of french-fried potatoes.

Summer or winter Olympics coming up? Ride the coattails of media attention and celebrate the event with wine and food samples from the host country, or from the country where your products originate. Ikea offers ‘Swedish meatballs’ and they’re always a hit. Yah.

When elections occur, certain restaurants grab media publicity by asking patrons to vote for candidates with their choice of hamburgers. An ice cream parlor or beer pub can do the same. The community press loves to cover events like this, so find your hook, announce your story in a news release and be sure to offer free samples to reporters.

To tie-in with an environmental story, a florist brings in a Green Peace author to sign autographs and sets up a display on “Amazing Amazon” plants. To piggyback on a story about identity frauds, a computer retailer presents free seminars on protecting yourself against online scams. Libraries are great free venues for such seminars and welcome suggestions from entrepreneurs. These programs are regularly written up in local community papers, so take advantage of the free publicity.

The possibilities for publicity news are endless. In every case, the main requirement is that your story be associated with some interesting current event and not a commercial activity.

2. Include statistics when pitching a story idea

Did you know 28 percent of Canadians said they believed in ghosts and spirits? A pretty compelling statistic, and perhaps it’s no wonder why Halloween is a \$5 billion industry in North America. The National Retail federation estimates the average consumer will spend \$65 on the pagan holiday, including \$23 on costumes, \$20 on candy, \$18 on decorations and \$4 on greeting cards.

We found those facts in one section of the Weekend Edition of the Toronto Star. The next time you’re reading a newspaper or magazine article, notice how many times the reporter mentions statistics high in the story.

Facts and figures validate your news release

When possible, load up with facts and figures when you create a press release. That’s because statistics help validate your story.

That same weekend edition of the paper mentioned a story about a Toronto city corporation going “green.” It said the corporation spent \$90 million on energy refits and cut its annual greenhouse emissions by 19,000 tonnes, the equivalent of about 10,000 cars. Hard facts, impressive statistics.

In another story about creating better building materials, the reporter described how two McMaster University engineers found that fired clay bricks became stronger and less porous with the addition of 15 percent crushed glass from recycled bottles. Since roughly 700 million bricks are produced in the province annually, that small improvement could make a big change.

Interesting. Imagine how a homebuilder or building supply store could use facts like these to draw attention and publicity to their store or business.

That’s what we mean about using facts to give credibility and “newsy-ness” to your publicity stories. In fact, lead with statistics if you really want to get a journalist’s attention.



MARKETING TIP:

If after several attempts, your press announcements are being ignored by a particular media outlet, remedy the situation. Try targeting another person or department. But never contact the media and ask why your news releases aren’t being used. Bad manners.”

ATTRACTING PUBLICITY

Where to find facts and statistics

Where do you find relevant facts and statistics to give your story journalistic credibility?

Today you're in luck. The Internet makes it quick and easy to search for virtually anything. Start with government agency websites and industry-specific websites for the latest statistical information with the most reliability. You can also use search engines to Google keywords for the information you require. For other common resource sites, check the last section of this workbook.

A bookstore owner might lead off her press release with a statistic on inner city literacy rates to bolster her announcement of a learn-to-read campaign and her free weekly story-hour for children. It's bound to capture the interest of education/city/human interest reporters—and their readers or viewers.



COOKING TIP:

When buying a turkey, purchase one pound of turkey per person to be served. This formula allows for the holiday meal plus a little left over for the prized turkey sandwich.

Similarly, with all the recent headline news about subprime mortgage losses, a real estate agent might lead off with a statistic on how many people fail to qualify for a mortgage. Use that fact to offer a seminar on "How to qualify for a home loan in today's market." With proof of a problem, the media is often willing to provide support for a story and publicize your event.

How many people over 50 are finding it difficult to enter the job market after a downsizing? Those statistics are easy to find, and if you're an outsourcing business, or a financial consultant, you can include those facts in a press release to get media attention and publicize, say an offer to conduct an online career/financial seminar for those affected.

To summarize, use facts and stats to give your story credibility and to provide support for your event or cause.

3. Participate in community events

It's easy to generate publicity for yourself or your business by piggybacking onto major public events. A lot of these activities recur year after year, which gives you plenty of advance time to plan your publicity strategy. For example, events like trade shows, fairs, auto and home shows attract thousands and usually receive lots of press. Naturally, you can ride the publicity train by arranging a display, exhibition or demonstration to coincide with the event and notifying the media of your plans.

To set the wheels in motion, find out who is in charge of public relations and offer to put on some kind of demonstration. If you're a dentist, offer a "zoom" teeth-whitening demo. If you sell cosmetics, provide free make-overs for the public.

ATTRACTING PUBLICITY

Got a catering business? Prepare a butter sculpture or exotic fruit carving display, or better yet, a chocolate fountain and offer a chocolate door prize. Yes, a door made of chocolate, it's a sure hook to whet the appetite of the media.

Work with organizers to get your name on the publicity calendar of events and the media materials. While there's no guarantee of coverage, you certainly improve your chances. Besides, media people always need a reference point and appreciate a little advance notice, so use a press release to let them know of your plans.

If it involves food or drink, the media will be there.

Even the (seemingly) insignificant can impress the masses and the media

To encourage a new, younger audience to sample their products, Proctor and Gamble (P&G) created Potty Palooza, a portable restroom that is shunted off to various outdoor concerts and festivals. Unlike the typical portable potty, the P&G version is immaculate and comes equipped with running water, wallpaper, hardwood floors and of course, Charmin™ ultra white toilet paper, Safeguard™ soap and Bounty™ paper towels.



To get media coverage, concert-style T-shirts with the message "Potty-Palooza...it's Loo-la-la" were sent to the local media in advance of each appearance. In addition, the company emailed press releases to the local media two days before each festival or fair.

The hoopla worked. Stories ran in TV and print in all local market stops. Three national news stories covered the "event." More important, during the time period, sales increased by 14 percent among consumers who used the facilities. Proof: even something insignificant as toilet paper can be newsworthy, if promoted with panache.

Action Plan: Check out a calendar of local crowd-gathering events for an opportunity to place your product or demonstrate your service. Speak to the event planner with your idea. Be inventive. Send out a T-shirt or promotional item to intrigue the local media.

More ideas to generate free publicity

If you need a little help with your creativity, here are a number of suggestions for publicity ideas to get the ball rolling. See how you can adapt them to your business or situation.

Use a celebrity connection to draw publicity

You don't need a movie star named Brad or Angelina to drop by your place of business to draw a crowd. Sure it might work like gangbusters, but there's a price to pay. On the other hand, local celebrities, including radio and TV personalities as well as sports athletes, musicians, authors and occasionally, even politicians, can attract a lot of people.

Use random acts of kindness to attract publicity

Guerrilla marketing involves promotional tactics that get "street" publicity in unexpected and often unusual ways. We love the following example gleaned from the kind-hearted tactics of a well-known department store.

During the holiday season Marshall Fields sends "Jingle Elves" onto the streets of Chicago to perform random acts of kindness. These ambassadors of goodwill offer hot chocolate along Michigan Avenue, pay bus and subways fares for commuters, hand out lip balm and hand lotion to pedestrians and read stories at local libraries.



What a great idea. Actions speak louder than words.

These kind gestures are far more persuasive than any ads that proclaim, "we care about our customers." The elves serve as reminder that holiday spirit is about giving, not receiving. The goodwill from the media coverage, word-of-mouth recommendations and blogger chat is phenomenal.

Good for you Marshall Fields, every retailer should follow your lead.

Action Plan: Think about a guerrilla-marketing tactic for your product or business. High school and college students from a drama class make excellent recruits to help deliver your activity to the streets. What can you do in a tangible way for your community at important event times of year?

Popular journalists, columnists and yes, cartoonists, are great people-magnets too. Stretch your imagination when trying to figure out the personality that best suits your publicity event.