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smart **Business** matters

Advice for Success!™

Make PR a Part of Your Marketing Plan

Why should you add a Public Relations campaign to your marketing tools? It can be free, it provides you with credibility, and it distinguishes you from your competition.

You may have created ads that have built business recognition, but great public relations material can, unlike advertising, build your credibility—and that credibility can help you stand above your competition and attract more customers. People tend to remember, and are often influenced by, what they read in the news, hear on the radio, and see on TV. Over time, positive stories in the news will paint you as the expert and provide you and your business with much more exposure. In addition to an investment of time, the keys to a successful PR campaign are to plan, network, write material that will interest your audience, and show some determination and persistence.



Set a Goal. Decide what the end game is. Your goal may be name recognition in your community. You may want to be seen as the local expert or to be featured in a trade journal with the potential to reach a larger audience of your peers. Do you want to be interviewed or quoted? Do you want your home design or incredible photo to be featured on the cover of a local or national magazine? Once you have a goal, you can plan to win!

Know your audience and your media outlets. Who are you trying to reach? Through what newspapers, journals, magazines, and other news (or “infotainment”) sources can you reach your target market? Determine the story types that various media outlets use, and provide them with “news” they want. Review contact information for newspapers and magazines that you think will be a good fit, and select a contact person. Depending upon what you are trying to achieve, that person could be the editor, the art director, a department or calendar editor, or perhaps a personal contact that can help you make connections.

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Protect Your Assets!

You work hard for your money. Consider saving your backside by putting together a comprehensive asset protection plan.



Running your own business is a risky venture, and even riskier if you don't have an asset protection plan in place. A comprehensive asset protection plan can safeguard your investment of time, labor, and money and can protect you from losing your ability to operate or start over should a serious financial threat arise.

Assess your liability. Consider your potential liabilities. Government taxes can whittle away your assets. Contract and health issues can take a toll on your earnings. Debts such as unpaid taxes, child support and alimony, business and personal loans, and medical bills are liabilities. Auto accidents, professional malpractice, homeowner and office accidents, rental property accidents can also endanger your earnings. Other liabilities come from labor law and criminal violations. Remember, you can also be held responsible for the actions of your partners, employees, and family members.

There are many ways you can safeguard your assets. Speak with a qualified financial planner or an attorney with estate planning expertise. Each business owner's situation is different, and they have the expertise to guide you to the solutions that are right for you. Traditional estate planning forms can be used as asset protection techniques. Retirement and pension plans have a measure of protection under government law. Certain provisions in life insurance contracts and certain types of trusts can prevent creditor attack. You may benefit from incorporating your business or forming a Limited Liability Company (LLC), Family Limited Partnership (FLP), or limited partnership.

Place your business and personal finances under a protective umbrella. It is possible to protect most or all of your personal and business assets legally, even in the worst circumstances. You owe it to yourself, your family, and your employees to do so. Ask about a Personal Liability Umbrella insurance policy to extend coverage from your other policies. If you give advice as part of your business, you also should consider "E&O" (Errors and Omissions) insurance.

Trying to protect your assets after a challenge arises is skirting a fraud charge. Isn't it time you think about legally protecting your assets—before a problem arises?

Happy Trails: Travel Safe

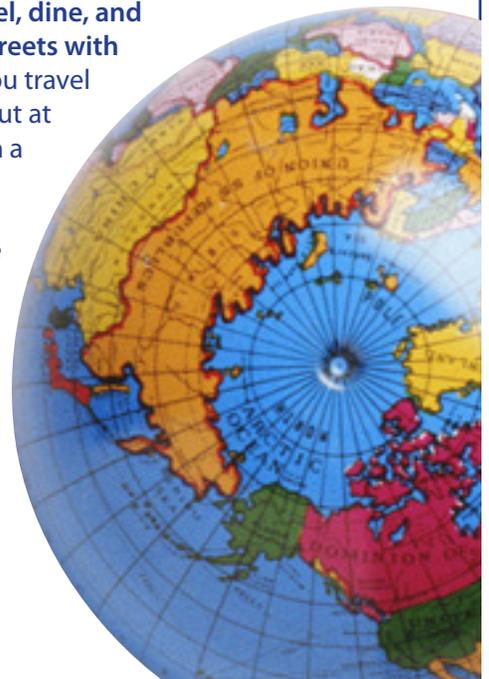
Study the culture. Know a bit about the culture of your travel destination; even more if the location is exotic or dangerous! Make sure you have a feel for the business pace, expectations, and social and business customs. Women should dress and behave similar to the women of that country. Men should be aware of addressing women; it can be seen as too forward in some cultures. Dressing or acting much differently can target you as a foreigner, be seen as offensive, or worse, endanger you.

Photocopy everything—passport, traveler's checks, credit cards, tickets, etc. Leave copies safe at home where a family member can find them should a crisis arise, and keep copies stashed safely away in your suitcase or carry-on. Keep two copies of business presentations: one for your suitcase, one for your carry-on. Leave your itinerary with your significant other, children, parents, and boss.

Limit cash and credit, and keep them safe. Carry only one credit card and a small amount of cash. Memorize your credit card PIN number before you leave. Keep your card, passport, and plane ticket in a safe interior pocket of a jacket or a concealed money belt. Split your cash up, hiding it in several places on your person.

Choose well-known hotels in safe areas. National hotel chains with interior room entrances provide more safety. Check door and window locks, and keep the curtains in your room closed. Women should ask security to walk them to their room if it is late, or to and from parking lots and garages if they've rented a car.

If possible travel, dine, and walk the city streets with associates. If you travel alone and are out at night, walk with a crowd. Keep to well lit, populated streets, be aware of your surroundings, and walk with confidence. Women can ward off unwanted male attention by wearing a fake engagement or wedding ring.



Tweet, Tweet

Six tips to help you to attract, and keep, a following on Twitter



Fill out your profile. When you set up your Twitter account, choose a Twitter handle as close as possible to your business or professional name for easy recognition. Fill out your profile with your name, website link, bio/about you, company name, and maybe a line or two regarding what you plan to tweet about. Upload your photo or logo to complete the profile.

Follow me, I'll follow you. Looking for followers? Find your friends and business associates and follow them. In turn, most will follow you. Follow companies and professionals you respect. Smaller ventures will likely follow you, and you may pick up some of their followers. You can ask for introductions to your friends' and associates' followers as well.

Advertise your Twitter handle. Your Twitter handle will be @YourTwitter-Name. When you update any of your marketing material (business cards, letterhead, brochures, etc.) don't forget to add it in. Add it to your email signature too!

Use a widget on your website. Twitter, and other online social media companies, offer widgets for your website which

allow you to pull your feeds onto your website. Twitter's can be found at: twitter.com/goodies/widgets.

Avoid constant self-promotion. The amount of time you spend singing your own praises should take up no more than 10 to 20% of your posts. Focus 80 to 90% of your tweets on sharing information such as interesting and pertinent article links, tips, photos, quotes, buzz, and general info. By offering tips and how-tos, you can "advertise" your expertise and demonstrate your knowledge. Some business owners also like to tweet about their other passions, like sports or fashion, but avoid going too far off-topic. Think about your followers' common interests.

Retweet! Occasionally, if you see a tweet from someone you think would be worth sharing, you can retweet it—like forwarding an email. You will have shared useful information with your followers and given a thumbs-up to the person who shared the original tweet. If that person is not a follower, he or she might become one. Be careful not to overdo the retweets—you need to add your own value!



GENERATE PUBLICITY THROUGH SPONSORSHIPS

If you have the money to spend, you can generate publicity through community involvement. Organize, sponsor, or participate in a community or cultural event or activity. Demonstrate your support for a local charity or cause. Or, sponsor a school or amateur adult athletic team. Be creative. There are many ways to stand out while doing great work for your city or town.

ARE YOU A MULTI-CHANNEL MARKETER?

According to a 2008 study by InfoTrends, more than 200 marketers surveyed reported an improvement of 35% for multi-channel campaigns (print, e-mail, web landing page) over single channel print-only campaigns. A multi-channel campaign was also more effective than a single channel electronic approach. Personalization further improved campaign performance: marketers reported an average improvement of close to 50% for personalized multi-channel campaigns over print-only campaigns.

Generate ideas. Think of ideas that will appeal to specific media outlets and your target audience. What types of announcements can you make? Send the date, time, and subject of an upcoming talk to a local group or event for the calendar section of a local newspaper. Have your photo taken and send that and a few paragraphs to the editor after the event. New products, new services, how-tos and other helpful information, the completion of a major job, new clients, industry or community awards, community service, industry survey results, new hires, new pricing, a bio or profile, industry trends, holiday specials—all of these and more are good subjects for press releases.

Create a plan. Determine the desired placement and timing of a specific piece, and keeping media lead times in mind, create your schedule. A local newspaper may only require lead-time of a week or two, but some journals or magazines may require two months or more. (You may need to pitch Christmas ideas as early as July for some publications, while news of new hires or a free offer can be published soon after release.) Monitor your efforts; create a spreadsheet listing the month, topic, target media, target run date, and actual run date. Slate a different story for each month, and submit it far enough in advance to give your business the best exposure. Keeping track of run dates gives you a better sense of the newspaper's ability to respond and also shows what you've accomplished. You can generally reprint stories (with the paper's permission of course!) to use for future marketing endeavors.

Be persistent and network with journalists. Whether you want to see a number of articles placed in one or several media sources, or a single article printed in a magazine, expect that your initial efforts may be overlooked. Communicate regularly with your target media sources and create relationships to ensure success. If your first submission is not printed, continue to send material monthly; eventually your persistence will pay off. A short conversation with the editor or reporter could uncover ways to increase your chances and help you refocus your efforts in the right direction. Maybe they are looking for a new regular feature you can provide.

Write it up and send it off! Make sure your material is well written and professional. Remember, your PR announcement should be "newsworthy," so write in the third person and keep the tone factual. This is no place for hype or a sales pitch. Follow a customary format for your press releases; it will make the editor's job easier and showcase your professionalism.

Follow that Format!

Writing your press release

Now that you've taken the time to plan your PR campaign, it's time to sit down and craft your first news piece. Follow the standard format for a press release. Some media outlets may vary in their format preferences, so be proactive and check for submission guidelines online.

Contact Information. As a general rule of thumb, place contact information at the top left of the page (some formats place it at the end of the article.) List contact, company name, phone(s), email, and web information flush left. The format is similar to a memo format (i.e., Contact: Joe Smith).

Release Date. At the top right, in all caps indicate FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE or FOR RELEASE ON [DATE] to inform the recipient to release the news as soon as possible or hold it for a future date.

Headline. Space about a third of the way down the page. Type and center your attention-grabbing headline (all caps) and add a centered subtitle if needed (upper and lower case) right below the headline.

Body Text. Body text should be set flush left and follow two spaces below the headline. Some media prefer double-spacing to allow them room to edit on paper. Begin your first paragraph of body text with your (italicized) city, state or country, date and a dash. If the event took place in a different location, use the most sensible location for your press release. Your first sentence should follow on that line and begin with a statement that answers the standard journalistic questions "who, what, where, when, why, or how." Your first line would appear like this: *Smalltown, State, November 12, 2010* — Joe Smith, Senior V.P. of Adesso Company was presented with the Distinguished Service Award from The International Club on Friday, November 6 at their annual awards dinner held at the Newtown Hotel.

Keep it Short. Use short, five to six sentence paragraphs, with a space between paragraphs. When crafting your release, list information from most to least important. For your last paragraph, include a "boilerplate" statement about your company. This can be a brief mention of services or products offered, a mission or vision statement, or other consistent message you wish to share. Remember, just the facts!

The End. Center and type # # # after the last paragraph to indicate the end of the release. Below that, you can add a short note to contact you with questions or for more information.

Mail It. Be sure that your press release is in a standard, easily opened format if you send it by email, and copy and paste the release directly into the email to ensure it can be read. A separate handwritten note with a mailed press release, or a few introductory sentences on an email are a nice touch.