

How To Get Local Media To Do Stories About Your Website

By George McKenzie

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Have you ever gotten one of those letters from your local property tax appraiser, informing you that your tax bill is going up about 20 percent?

I got one of those recently, so I took it to my friend Joe Gross. He appeals property tax assessments for a living.

"Man," he said. "I've never seen assessments shoot up like they have this year."

My "news antenna" shot up. Then when he showed me his new web site, which gave property owners a chance to look up appraisals of other homes in their neighborhood, I told him--"You've got to pitch this to the news media."

I helped Joe put together a short release and then faxed it to local radio and TV stations. A few nights later, there was Joe, on the evening news, describing his web site to tens of thousands of viewers.

Could it happen to you? You bet, if you remember a couple of basics.

***Learn to spot opportunities. When you see, hear or read something that relates to your field, call the reporter who did the story and offer "another angle" or a "follow-up." Reporters are often judged on their ability to

"enterprise" their own stories and ideas, and if you help make THEIR job easier...guess what they're likely to do for YOU?

Recently the San Antonio Express News ran a story about some new software. Darrin Schroeder, VP of a San Antonio company that had just rolled out a similar product, called the reporter and offered a "follow-up." Result: front page story, with color picture, several days later.

***Don't be afraid to ask. Listening to a pitch is part of every reporter's job. And keep this in mind: because they work on deadline, they don't always have much time to talk. So sometimes "No" just means "Not now." It's okay to try again another time.

***Talk high touch more than high tech. A high tech feature is great...but only if it results in a high touch benefit that makes life simpler, easier, more enjoyable, or more interesting. Pitch how it saves time or money and cuts down aggravation. Humanize it as much as possible, and if you know of someone who legitimately loves and uses your site, offer them as a possible interviewee.

Getting free publicity isn't nearly as hard as you probably think. It will cost you some time and energy, but it doesn't have to cost you cash. You WILL get results if you keep trying, and the rewards will far outweigh the effort. Just ask Joe Gross.

George McKenzie has almost thirty years experience in radio and TV. His work has appeared on ABC, NBC, CBS, ESPN and CNN, and he currently hosts several radio talk shows in San Antonio, Texas.

George is the founder and CEO of The Academy Of Free Advertising, Marketing And Publicity, <http://www.get-free-publicity.com> . He invites you to subscribe to the Academy's free ezine, Get Free Publicity, at <http://www.get-free-publicity.com/subscribe.htm> .

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