

Sell The Story, Not The "Store"

By George McKenzie

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Imagine yourself sitting down in a meeting room to listen to a presentation by a speaker.

The speaker begins by saying. "Statistics show" and then proceeds to reel off a list of figures aimed at making a point. Before long, though, you'll probably be thinking about all the other places you'd rather be.

Now imagine that the speaker begins by saying "Once upon a time"

You automatically start paying attention because you know you're about to hear a story.

People love stories. And they'll stop what they're doing if they think they're going to hear a good one.

The greatest teachers of all time have taught their lessons through stories, anecdotes, examples. Even parables.

And you'll start getting loads of free publicity from the media if you understand that they're really in the storytelling business.

Joan Stewart is a former newspaper reporter and editor with more than 20 years experience. She says that during her

career, she got hundreds of calls from people saying, in so many words, "Cover me, pay attention to me, give me publicity."

Of course, what they really wanted was free advertising for some product they were selling. And when Joan would ask, politely of course, why the public would want to know more about it, they'd launch into details about how wonderful their product was and all the features it offered.

Among professional sales people, this is called "selling features instead of benefits."

Among news decision-makers this is called, selling the store, not the story.

In other words, people who want publicity often try to sell their product (the store), when they should be trying to sell a story connected to their product.

Getting media coverage on any given day is something of a crapshoot. But you'll increase your chances enormously if you offer the media stories that contain one or more of the following elements:

- They're controversial and/or timely.
- They raise eyebrows.
- They affect large numbers of people.
- They deal with pocketbook issues.
- They feature dogs and kids.
- They show David beating Goliath.
- They highlight milestones, records, and firsts.
- They introduce new ideas and technologies.

When I worked at KMSP TV in the Twin Cities in the late 70's, one of our competitors ran a great promotion campaign that I've never forgotten because it reduced the nature of news to its essence.

They boasted, "We tell you what you need to know, and what you like to know."

When you're pitching an idea to someone in the media, ask yourself Why is this something people need to know or would like to know?

If you have a good answer to that question, and you can communicate it quickly and clearly to news decision-makers, you've got a great chance of getting free publicity.

George McKenzie is the author of "Going Public: 10 Ways To Use The Mass Media For Free Advertising, Internet Marketing And

Website Promotion. <http://www.get-free-publicity.com>

He has almost thirty years experience in radio and TV. Subscribe to his free ezine, "Get Free Publicity," by sending a blank email to <mailto:george2-13712@sendtheinfo.com>

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