

To Get Free Publicity, Learn To "Talk The Talk"

By George McKenzie

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When you're trying to persuade a reporter to do a story about you or your business, you're much more likely to succeed if you know how to "talk the talk"

No reporter will expect you to act like an insider, but you'll get a lot more respect -and attention - if you can speak the language of the newsroom.

It's not like learning Mandarin. In fact, all you need to do is sprinkle your pitch with a couple of catchwords and phrases. For instance:

Newshook - Connecting a story to something that's already in the news makes it more interesting. For instance: a hot topic right now is airline security. A story about a company that's developing a retinal scan or a handprint identification device would automatically appeal to news decision-makers.

Local Angle - Events happening on a national or even international stage still can have local impact. Most obvious example: when the U.S recently began bombing Afghanistan, many local reserve units were called up. That offered a variety of possibilities, including:

Human Interest Stories - We all saw video of the destruction at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and Somerset, Pennsylvania. Stories that followed about the

impact on families who lost loved ones in the attacks were human interest stories.

Such stories appeal to everyone because - among other reasons - we all ask ourselves, "What if it were me?"

Follow-ups - If you're disappointed because a reporter talked to your competitor about something, but not to you, you can probably get your turn by offering a follow up.

Future File - Generic name for any system that collects news releases, notes, or any information related to future events.

Evergreen - A story that isn't necessarily tied to a newshook. Evergreens are stories the media pull "out of the can" to use on slow news days when there's not much going on and they have a lot of time to fill.

Kicker - This one relates TV only. The "kicker" is a short, generally amusing story just before the end of a newscast. It's supposed to leave you smiling even if you've just watched nearly thirty minutes of mayhem.

If you want to portray yourself as knowledgeable and savvy, just tell an assignment editor you've got something you think will make a good kicker. They'll pay attention, since good local kickers aren't always easy to find. Plus, if you've got interesting video, they'll "tease" the kicker all the way through the newscast - which means you get even more exposure.

Sprinkling your pitch to the media with these words and phrases will greatly improve your chances of getting free publicity.

And that reminds me of one last thing.

Never use the word "publicity" when pitching a reporter. Always call it "coverage."

When you "talk the talk" of the newsroom, "publicity" is one word you never want to say.

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>

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