

Tips are Perennially Tempting

By Marcia Yudkin

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Techies love them. Young and old technology haters love them. Most importantly, editors love them. Tips -- neatly packaged, numbered nuggets of advice -- are always appealing to those whose job it is to fill up publications with entertaining and illuminating information. They can therefore represent a lucrative route to publicity for you or your organization.

The content of tips that earn you media coverage doesn't have to be original, exclusive or startling. You can offer up things most people in your position know. Their charm is mainly in the writing and packaging.

Start with an irresistible title, usually including a number, such as "Seven Steps to a Summer Without Bug Bites," "Four Secrets Real Estate Agents Don't Want Homebuyers to Know" or "11 Ways Not to Ingratiate Yourself to The Boss." Then brainstorm ideas and choose the best and second best and so on, until you have the number you'd chosen.

Rewrite each item so that it begins with a brief phrase summarizing the idea, which might appear in boldface in a magazine or on the Web. For example, here's a crisp, properly formatted item #1 for the first-mentioned set of tips:

1. Inform yourself. Ask about buggy seasons and areas before finalizing your vacation plans. For instance, some beaches are more mosquito-infested than others. Your first-choice time slot for a holiday might be black-fly season up at the lakes.

A good way to set up a tips press release is to sandwich the tips between a lead paragraph introducing the topic in a timely way and a final paragraph about your organization. Include the URL of your Web site, where people can go for

more information. If you have a longish set of tips, use the press release as a tease, presenting only a few of your items and specifying how readers can get the whole set, such as by calling, faxing on their office letterhead, sending an email request or visiting a certain Web address.

Tips can help you generate product orders or client leads or targeted Web traffic when you associate the tips with a new product, an ongoing service you provide or features at your Web site. By mentioning a specific URL only in your press releases, your traffic logs will reveal which traffic arrived because of media publicity.

You can increase the timeliness and odds of getting tips published when you tie them to holidays, particularly minor ones. If you run a dieting program, why not gear some tips to recovering from Fourth of July picnic binges rather than Christmas dinners? Editors love tips the year round, but they love them most when they need a holiday tie-in and yours shows up.

Don't forget to post your tips at your Web site. Make sure your text includes the phrases someone looking for advice on that topic would type into a search engine. Easy-to-read practical tips are some of the most popular pages on the Internet. The catchy title you slaved over will help attract search engine traffic, too!

Marcia Yudkin marcia@yudkin.com is the author of the classic guide to comprehensive PR, "6 Steps to Free Publicity," now for sale in an updated edition at Amazon.com and in bookstores everywhere. She also spills the secrets on advanced tactics for today's publicity seekers in "Powerful, Painless Online Publicity," available from www.yudkin.com/powerpr.htm .

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