

Understanding Niche Publicity

By Marcia Yudkin

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Everyone keeps their radio tuned to station WIIFM - What's In It For Me. This fact and its implications hold a valuable secret for multiplying publicity opportunities.

Let's put ourselves first in the position of the editor of a magazine for floral shops. His assistant has collected the day's press releases for her, and he gives each headline a scan before either reading more carefully or tossing it. His foremost concern during his five-second screen: Is this relevant to florists, my readers?

Naturally anything with the word "florists" or "flowers" in the headline commands a thorough read. And since his readers all own or operate a small business, anything with "small business" in the headline catches his attention as well. Without these key words or phrases in the headline, the editor is forced to translate, to think whether a general message about a trend, a law, a new service or an event holds significance for her market.

Likewise, when the editor of a portal site for financial service professionals peruses the day's business releases, anything with "finance" or better yet, "financial professionals" compels her to click through. In browsing mode, her brain might not think quickly enough to see "E-Learning Grew 40% in 2001, Expected to Double in 2002" and understand that this relates to her readers' ability to obtain continuing education more cheaply and efficiently. However, if she saw "Financial Services Professionals Keep Skills Tuned Through Rising E-Learning Trend," she wouldn't ever ignore it.

Now let's explore what this means for the smart publicity seeker. If you want to maximize your media coverage, begin by making a list of professions, industries or consumer segments that would benefit from what you're promoting. Then

craft a general press release and change the headline and at least part of the contents for each niche so that the relevance to that group jumps out unmistakably.

For instance, a few years ago a client of mine released a new video on the home and family life of the Amish. I watched the video and took notes on the kinds of magazines that would be interested in different aspects of the material, then fashioned a headline for each angle. The reference to "happiest" in three of the headlines refers to a scientific study mentioned in the video narration.

1. Travel - New video, "Amish Values & Virtues...Plain & Simple," reveals the everyday life of America's happiest, most picturesque community
2. Country - New video, "Amish Values & Virtues...Plain & Simple," reveals the beliefs underlying America's happiest rural lifestyle
3. Parenting - New video, "Amish Values & Virtues...Plain & Simple," reveals the child-rearing practices underlying America's happiest lifestyle
4. Christian - New video, "Amish Values & Virtues...Plain & Simple," shows Christian values shaping a way of life.

About half of the release text stayed unchanged from version to version, and the rest elaborated on the travel, country, parenting or Christian content. Thanks to the niching, this video took off faster than any of my clients' previous releases.

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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