

Book Review: Do It Yourself Publicity

By Ramona Creel

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Does the idea of asking for free publicity terrify you? If you said "yes," you aren't alone! Small business owners often miss out on the bountiful good fortune that free press brings -- simply because they are afraid to ask for it. But don't worry -- David Ramacitti's "Do-It-Yourself Publicity" will blow all of your fears about dealing with the media out of the water!

Publicity is one of the most effective and least utilized tools in an entrepreneur's marketing arsenal. People trust newspaper articles and radio shows more than they do paid advertising. When your company is shown in a favorable light by the press, you are afforded instant credibility and authority. And as Mr. Ramacitti points out, the media needs you as much as you need them! Their jobs depend on finding interesting stories to cover -- and yours could be the next one!

NEWS RELEASES -- THE HAMMER AND SAW OF PUBLICITY

Your news release is your media "calling card" -- a way of introducing your company to the press. Mr. Ramacitti suggests that every news release you send falls into one of four categories. ANNOUNCEMENTS offer a "heads-up" about upcoming events, such as a public appearance or new product. BACKGROUNDERS offer detailed information about a hot topic, and may include your opinions on a trend or local news story. FEATURES will tend to offer a profile of your business and possibly your interactions with clients.

And FOLLOW-UP releases help you respond to another story or bring a previous piece to a close. And as Mr. Ramacitti points out, there is an appropriate time and place for each type of release. He offers some valuable suggestions for writing a good news release, and even provides sample releases for you to use as a model when creating your own press kit.

TYPES OF MEDIA OUTLETS -- TARGETING YOUR PUBLICITY

You can send out thousands of press releases about your company -- and chances are, you will probably land at least one or two good stories. But you will have also spent a lot of time and money with no guaranteed result. Mr. Ramacitti suggests that it is more effective to TARGET your PR efforts toward those media outlets that are most likely to be interested in you.

To do this, you must understand the strengths and weaknesses of each type of media -- from newspapers and magazines to TV and radio. Mr. Ramacitti also reminds us not to forget NON-MAJOR media outlets -- those that tend to focus on a smaller and much more specific audience. These publications and shows tend to be segmented according to geography, lifestyle,

and special interest. Once you identify which audience you wish to reach, you can target your publicity efforts on the appropriate media outlets and guarantee your marketing strategy a great deal more success.

YOUR MEDIA PLAN -- PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Just sending out a sporadic trickle of news releases won't get you the kind of publicity you deserve for your business. Mr. Ramacitti offers a SEVEN-STEP PLAN for creating a continual stream of good press. Your plan should describe who your company is, outline those target groups that you wish to reach, and what you hope to accomplish through your publicity campaign. Mr. Ramacitti also suggests that you try to generate a list of STORY IDEAS -- brainstorm about all of the wonderful reasons for an editor or producer to focus in on your company.

Finally, think about which media outlets would be most interested in each of your story ideas. Would the newspapers love to write an article about your grand opening? Maybe the local TV station would jump at the chance to produce a piece on "Get Organized Week." The only step left is to compose and send off your news releases -- and watch the publicity roll in, of course!

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