

Are You Using Press Releases to Your Advantage?

By Susan Dunn

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Press Releases. Have you ignored this wonderful way to get publicity because you're intimidated, or don't know how it works? Here are some tips gained from my many years experience working with the media.

1. Forget the "spam" mindset.

Receiving "masses of unsolicited mail/email" is what editors do for a living. Send it on! They want to hear from you though they don't know you, and though they didn't opt-in. They receive masses of mail daily, and they're looking for more. Go ahead and "bulk mail" them.

2. Don't be intimidated by format.

There is a formal form for submitting a press release, but take it from me, if your item is newsworthy, you could probably send it on toilet paper. Content -- juicy, useable items -- matters more than the format.

3. And by content I don't mean great writing.

I mean news! Good, timely news well-written -- use your spellcheck -- but it isn't like writing a Shakespearean play. They're the writers; you're the supplier of the material. See the difference? Get your point across clearly, succinctly. Put the information in front of them; that's all they ask.

4. Then back off!

Only the PR naive (like many bosses I had, how about you?) "follow up" a press release. And only the really naive (and rude) have different members from the organization/business call to follow up. They got your email. Don't waste their time with phone calls and faxes asking if they did. It's just like with dating, I'm afraid. If they wanted to talk with you, they'd call you.

5. If you want to advertise, buy an ad. An advertisement isn't "news".

That's how the newspapers and magazines look at it. A press release that's a thinly disguised advertisement won't be appreciated and if you get a reputation for sending them, you'll get blacklisted and your releases won't even be read. Learn to write it so it's deeply disguised -- something informative, inspirational, interesting, tear-jerking or heart-warming. There's an art to it; at first you may want to hire a coach for a couple of sessions. (Some PR firms will write them for you for hundreds of dollars. I'm cheaper, and I'll teach you how to do it and set you free.)

6. Need addresses?

Try <http://www.gebbieinc.com> for addresses and links.

7. Cultivate your own relationship" with the press.

Many entities who want to submit a press release for you will claim they have the necessary relationship with the press, but don't count on it. PR firms who request to send their things in usually follow up with a gift. That may be the extent of the "relationship," and their press releases thenceforth go in the trash.

8. Don't tickle the gorilla.

If you've summoned the press, be ready. When they call, know your facts and have them handy (and you won't believe the stuff they'll ask). Schedule the call if you can, and have other people there you might need - technical person, your assistant, other directors, lawyer ... If you can't answer at the time, you may lose them, but you may get a chance to email them data; do it within an hour or two. Likewise, make sure all the necessary contact data is in the missive - they have to be able to reach you, and no, they won't be looking you up in the yellow pages if you fail to list your phone number.

9. It's a numbers game.

Send it to appropriate media and editors, but don't be shy. Getting selected could be as simple as trying another editor on another day with a slightly different title. Don't take rejection personally; keep trying. If a train in your town has a chemical spill, or the president decides to come to town, you're out of luck ... it was just a bad day.

10. Streamline your email, mark the subject line, don't send attachments, you don't need to go down there, and remember they're writers!

Make sure it's clear what your press release is about. Also, writers are writers They process and think in terms of writing; it's their first language. They like to READ things, not HEAR

them. So phone calls and personally-delivered messages aren't their favorite thing. Respect this. And if they call, don't expect a lot of small talk. Their deadlines are relentless and high-pressure. Respect this. Have a coach go over some of these points with you at length, and you'll save yourself a lot of time and grief, and probably have reasonable success.

(c)Susan Dunn, Marketing Coach, helps clients promote their businesses and services with coaching and a vareity of ebooks. Article-writing service. Visit her on the web at www.webstrategies.cc/articles.htm or <mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc> and get started TODAY on greater profitability.

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