

4th Quarter 2003 Publicity = 1st Quarter 2004 Prosperity

By Todd Brabender-Spread The News PR

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As the year starts to wind down, many businesses and entrepreneurs are making plans and budgets for the year 2004. Those plans could include anything from setting up goals for new products to preparing marketing, sales and PR/publicity campaigns. When it comes to your publicity plan, WHEN you launch your campaign can be just as important to what and how you launch.

HOLIDAY PUBLICITY OPPORTUNITIES

If your product/business lends itself to increased holiday sales, the next few weeks are a perfect time to get a publicity campaign launched - given the right media targets. Many holiday issues are already been laid out for magazines, and many other media outlets are feverishly seeking information/pitches on innovative stories for the holidays. Some media outlets even reorganize or beef up staff around the holidays to allow for an increase in stories on products. Have your publicist help you take advantage of this increased media opportunity.

PLANTING PUBLICITY SEEDS NOW FOR 1ST QUARTER RESULTS

Some business owners may be of the mindset: "I think we'll wait to launch a publicity campaign until after January 1st." The problem is -- if you wait to launch your publicity campaign until the first of the year hoping for a quick media interest blast in January, you may be in for a quiet month. Keep in mind most media outlets have editorial lead-times of a few weeks to 6 months. Also what some entrepreneurs don't realize is this. Because of the increasing number of publicity pitches media outlets receive, anything you send out is subjected to what I call the "media digestion period" - simply put - that is a period of time (sometimes weeks, sometimes months) that it takes media outlets to:

#1) see/understand your release and decide if they are interested;

#2) find space/time in their editorial calendar to place the article/news story/show segment.

The potential placement is also directly dependent upon how quickly and efficiently your publicist or PR agency can help the media secure the placement. Media relations is crucial. Your publicist's job is to make the reporter/editor/producer's job as easy and as effortless as possible - which will lead to quicker and more numerous placements for your business.

When it comes to publicity pitches, the facts are: placement is totally up to the discretion of the particular media outlet; and very few media responses are immediate. I have in fact had media

outlets respond even before the media release seemed to settle in the fax machine tray. Conversely, I also had one media outlet that responded 17 months after a pitch. (I had to ask the reporter what the YEAR was on the release!) NO placement is guaranteed, but you can definitely increase the odds. Even if your product/business is a dead-on perfect match for a media outlet's editorial profile, you are not guaranteed placement without some hard work and media relations. That's why timing of your publicity pitch is so critical. Have your publicist get your pitch to the media, allow the editorial staff to digest it a bit, and strategically and professionally "rattle the cage" over the next several weeks to generate as many placements as possible.

What we are trying to do is plant seeds in media outlets' editorial garden so they will bear fruit -- in the form of articles/show placements -- continuously over the next several weeks and months. Like the plant that comes from a seed, publicity placements can also grow roots and lead to other arterial media placements in other media outlets. Given the right tending, the publicity seeds you plant over the next few weeks/months will indeed germinate and you'll reap a wonderful harvest for your business well past the first quarter of next year.

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