

Benefiting From Fourth Quarter Publicity

By Todd F. Brabender

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As the year enters the fourth quarter, many businesses and entrepreneurs are making plans and budgets for the year 2002. 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 as what and how you launch.

PLANTING PUBLICITY SEEDS

Some business owners may be of the mindset: "I think we'll wait to launch a publicity campaign until after January 1 to generate consumer interest." 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 start of the year. 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 submit is subjected to what I call the "media digestion period" - simply put - that is a period of time (sometimes days, sometimes weeks) 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.

Given the right media research and pitching expertise, there are several media opportunities you could pursue. From my professional experience, here is the breakdown of editorial lead-times of the media formats from quickest to most drawn out: (These are estimates and can vary from campaign to campaign)

- 1) Radio Shows -- 1 to 4 weeks lead-time
- 2) TV News Affiliate Shows - 2 to 6 weeks lead-time
- 3) Daily & Weekly Newspapers - 3 to 8 weeks lead-time
- 4) Magazines & Network TV Shows - 1 to 6 months lead-time

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.

HOLIDAY PUBLICITY OPPORTUNITIES

If your product/business lends itself to increased holiday sales, the next several weeks are a perfect time to get a product publicity campaign launched - given the right media targets. Although

many holiday issues have already been laid out for magazines, many other media outlets are feverishly seeking information/pitches on innovative stories for the holidays. Some media outlets even reorganize or beef up staff toward the end of the year to allow for an increase in stories on products. Have your publicist help you take advantage of this increased media opportunity.

I have in fact had media outlets respond to our media release literally minutes after pitching it. Conversely, one media outlet responded to one of our releases 17 months after a pitch. (I had to ask the reporter what the YEAR was on the release!) You can definitely increase the odds with some hard work and effective 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 will indeed germinate and you'll reap a wonderful harvest for your business now and into the first quarter of next year.

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