

Publicity Campaigns: How Many Hours -- How Many Months?

By Todd F. Brabender

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When it comes to generating publicity for a product, business or website, one of the hardest decisions entrepreneurs have to make is whether to launch the campaign themselves. What makes it tough is trying to determine the amount of time it might take to launch and maintain a successful publicity campaign. This article will help address a couple of those critical elements: the length of your publicity efforts and; the respective number of hours it may take to get the job done effectively.

In my PR career, I have launched campaigns that needed the blast of just a few weeks of publicity and I have also maintained lengthy campaigns that generated media exposure for years. From my professional experience, I can tell you that a single distribution of a media release is rarely effective. Most times, editors and reporters are working on multiple stories at once and need some time to consider your pitch. Although your release may indeed be interesting and newsworthy, the editor may simply not have the space to use your pitch at that point in the media outlet's editorial calendar. So make sure he/she sees it again when that editorial calendar opens up a few weeks down the line. Keep in mind also that because media outlets receive so many media releases and story pitches these days, it can sometimes take them weeks before they actually get to something you may have sent their way. That's why it's important to conduct extensive media follow-ups over the course of several months to ensure media reception, proper media digestion and hopefully media acceptance of your release or pitch.

I tell my clients, "No PR agency or publicist in the world can FORCE the media to use their releases, but they CAN make sure that by the end of the campaign, the media has seen or heard about your message in one form or another - which will lead to solid media coverage."

One of the keys to determining the length of a successful campaign is knowing when you have fired all your publicity bullets; when it's time to re-pack the chambers with new ammo; or when you should move onto other marketing targets. Over the past several years, here's how the campaign lengths have broken down for my clients:

1-2 month campaigns : 9%

3-6 month campaigns: 46%
6-9 month campaigns: 29%
9+ month campaigns: 16%

- 1 - 2 month campaigns are most often timely, date-sensitive campaigns -- a release or message tied to a current event that may be outdated in 6 - 8 weeks. A while back, one client of mine quickly produced a website aimed at stopping Napster's file sharing services. We launched a campaign a few weeks before the Supreme Court ruling and generated some great spot coverage in newspapers and TV news shows nationwide -- the site and the campaign were finished in 6 weeks.
- Most new product publicity campaigns are best suited for the 3 - 6 month time frame -- allowing for the often drawn out lead-times of some media outlets. Having said that though, some product campaigns can be extended for several more months based on media reaction and subsequent consumer interest. For instance, the "scooter" product publicity campaign likely started out as a six-month program, but that was stretched out over a year because of the sales fervor and popularity of the product.
- The longest campaigns are for those clients whose businesses or expertise are "evergreen and regenerative" - meaning they are not tied to the shelf life of a new product launch; aren't linked to a specific date; and can be re-stocked for a new round of media interest every few months. One of my longtime clients is a "tradeshow specialist". Her expert advice is newsworthy anytime of year and can be covered editorially year after year - especially in business and trade magazines. That lends itself to multiple articles and features month after month in a wide array of media outlets. Remember -- creativity and media pitching ingenuity can help add months of success to your publicity campaign.

HOW MANY HOURS:

A large number of hours will be spent planning and shaping your publicity campaign for the media market. The preparation of the media market research and the polishing of the media release may seem painstaking, but when done right, they are well worth the effort. After the initial launch of the campaign, be prepared to spend at least an hour or two each day maintaining it: conducting numerous media follow-ups and making new media pitches, (emails, faxes, mailings and phone calls); fulfilling media requests (forwarding product photos, media kits/product samples, arranging interviews) and tracking/clipping articles and features.

Here's a brief rundown on the number of hours that may be involved in a typical campaign:

(These hours are averaged estimates. Many PR specialists might be able to get the work done more efficiently for you.)

CAMPAIGN LAUNCH

Media Release Writing/Editing:	5 hours
Media Market Research:	15 hours
Media Distribution:	10 hours

TOTAL LAUNCH HOURS: 30 hours

CAMPAIGN MAINTENANCE: 30+ hours /month

(3-Month Campaign)

(90 hours)

TOTAL CAMPAIGN HOURS -120+ work hours

If you have the time, staff and expertise to launch your own campaign, then take advantage of the media and get your message to them. But if your expertise lies in another area, and you or your staff lack publicity generating skills (or have little or no experience in dealing with the media) it might be best to hand it off to someone who can make sure its done right - the first time. Ask yourself these questions when deciding whether you can handle your own publicity campaign:

- Do I have the expertise and time to get it done effectively without hampering my current workload or that of my staff?
- Do I have the writing capabilities to put together a media release or feature pitch to which editors, reporters and producers will respond?
- Do I have the resources to conduct the media research and distribute my release to those media outlets?

If you answered "yes" to all, not just some of these questions, then perhaps you can benefit from launching your own publicity campaign. Best of luck!

Todd Brabender is the President of Spread The News Public Relations, Inc.. His business specializes in generating publicity & media exposure for innovative products/businesses/websites.

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