

Do-It-Yourself Public Relations

By Bonnie Jo Davis

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"Advertising is what you pay for. Publicity is what you pray for."

What is a small business owner to do? You have dozens, hundreds or even thousands of competitors around the world. How do you make yourself known amid all the noise and confusion? One thing is for certain. You may or may not have a budget for marketing and promotion but you want to get the most bang for your buck.

Stretch your budget by developing a low cost public relations campaign that you can handle in house. Publicity is a much more powerful tool than advertising and a successful campaign lends credibility to you and your company.

Use the following tips to take advantage of the many opportunities to make yourself known in the on-line and off-line world. Think creatively and you'll come up with even more ideas to propel your public relations campaign ahead.

1) Write articles such as customer case studies, book reviews, how to advice, editorials, etc. and develop a snazzy by-line that drives readers to your web site. Submit your articles to directories, newsgroups, e-zines, web sites and off-line newsletters and magazines. You'll be astonished at how far one article can reach and how it can convert readers to loyal, long-term clients. If you need guidance with this technique consider signing up for the "Expert Articles" teleclass held by Dr. Rachna D. Jain. E-mail Dr. Jain at Coach6-46006@autocontactor.com for more information.

2) Speak for free at your local Chamber of Commerce, trade associations and clubs. Ask the sponsoring organization to hand out your business cards and brochures to all attendees prior to the event. Collect business cards and hold a prize drawing at the end of your speech. Use the business cards to send out "thank you for attending" e-mails after the event and ask for permission to add the recipient to your newsletter list. Build this list and communicate regularly.

3) Approach local and national radio shows covering your target audience and offer to appear as a guest. You will need to craft a pitch letter that can be sent via e-mail to the producer of the show. Make your pitch exciting and spend a great deal of time on the benefits listeners will derive from your segment. To find radio stations search the brs web-radio site at <http://www.radio-directory.com/>.

4) Write a free e-book on a topic of use to your potential clients. People have become accustomed to receiving free information that is nicely formatted and easy to read. You can advertise your

products and services in your free e-book and sell or swap advertising with other related businesses. Tip e-books (101 ways to...) and article compilations are very popular. Promote your free e-book at <http://www.ebookdirectory.com/> and <http://www.free-ebooks.net/> . Make your e-book viral by authorizing readers to freely distribute copies.

5) A well written and intriguing press release can lead to stories in the press that increase sales, enhance credibility and give your company a competitive advantage. For free distribution use PR Web at <http://www.prweb.com> . PR Web maintains a database of over 60,000 media contacts who receive daily e-mail listings of press releases which match their topic criteria. If you need help creating and formatting your press releases consider purchasing software such as Press Release O-Matic at <http://www.press-release-creator.com/> .

6) Sponsor events and contests. Grand openings of shopping centers, businesses, car dealerships, etc. are some events you may want to sponsor along with fairs, festivals, open houses and community events. You can locate on-line contests to sponsor at About.com. They offer a very good searchable directory of contests at <http://contests.about.com/> . Be sure to publicize your sponsorship on your web site and mention it in your newsletter and in your press releases.

7) Solicit testimonials and use them. Request a testimonial from every past and current client. Offer sample testimonials or an outline to those clients who are reluctant writers. Send out testimonials to prospects, include them in your marketing materials, add them to your web site and e-mail signature block, add one to each press release and put them on the back of your business cards.

8) Frequent the newsgroups, topical lists and on-line boards that cater to your profession or your target audience. Offer free advice, URLs of helpful articles or web sites and your opinion. Don't overtly promote. Be wise and helpful while showing your expertise and your reputation as someone to be trusted will grow. Marcia Yudkin of <http://www.yudkin.com> has done this very successfully for years. Now she's known near and far for her marketing expertise and her opinion is very well respected.

Building your public relations presence is an ongoing process that is most effectively achieved when you employ multiple strategies. Develop a plan, think creatively, promote consistently and your business will stand out from the crowd!

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Bonnie Jo Davis is an experienced shoestring marketer who specializes in article submission for fun and for profit! Sign-up for her FREE "Solving The Article Submission Puzzle" e-course by visiting <http://www.articlethatsell.com/ecourse.htm> .

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