

ProfitMeister

MAXIMIZING YOUR MARKETING MONEY

SPECIAL REPORT

PR Novice? Get 'How-To' Here

Use Public Relations to Amp up Marketing With Ease, NOW!

- ◆ *Concerned about getting additional visibility in today's complex, changing marketplace?*
- ◆ *Stymied by publicity know-how you don't have time to decipher?*
- ◆ *Determined to move your business forward step-by-step?*

Inside: A framework for using public relations as one of your marketing pillars for the year. Every quarter ProfitMeister reviews a pillar (channel) that provides a foundation for your marketing efforts. Within each channel there are numerous tactics. We suggest concentrating on the three or four that appeal to your personality. Rather than trying a dozen different things, get good at a few.

This Special Report includes information on public relations in small bytes for easy implementation:

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Plan

- ◆ *A four letter word to send chills up and down your spine.*

"I don't have time to plan; we're scheduled to ship tomorrow."

"What do you mean, plan? I've got a business to run."

- ◆ *Where preparation meets opportunity.*

Keri showed me a one page draft of her year. It featured four products on which she would concentrate with explicit promotional opportunities for each product. A quick discussion solidified the entire vision and turned it into a potential cash machine: one product, a time-saving system for e-mail, could serve as a funnel for all others. How easy was that! Had Keri skipped the **planning** stage, she might have completely missed the connection.

Use this acronym for PLAN:

- P – position
- L – leverage
- A – analyze
- N – nurture

P - represents position. Look at the year and outline your events according to the calendar. As you do this, begin to visualize the big opportunities. Keri, a profes-

The 6 P Solution:
 “Proper
 prior
 planning
 prevents
 poor
 performance.”

Brian Tracy

sional speaker, could easily see where her largest speaking engagements fell and plan accordingly.

Organizations might simply outline the year by inserting repeatable events. Thus, the schedule takes shape. Rather than re-inventing the wheel, this positioning strategy lets one review, rate and go forward.

L – leverage means using previous situations to your advantage. In Keri’s case, demonstrating the power of her e-mail presentation in a 30-minute engagement lets participants see the value of the half-day seminar. (She says, “Give me 25 minutes and I’ll add an hour to your day tomorrow.” Now that’s a benefit I’ll look forward to.) The e-mail product serves as the leverage point for her leads.

In addition, previous publicity can be leveraged to add to credibility and visibility. Linking stories published in 2008 to products or services advertised today makes sense. The online media room offers a perfect leverage opportunity. Listing and linking previous media coverage adds to the content of your website as well as to the links from it.

A – analyze your work. Keri did her homework and asked for input. Another set of eyes leads to valuable input, often creating synergy. The value of synergy can only be experienced in process.

N - nurture sums up my plan approach. Not only do you solidify your thoughts, you have an opportunity to let the power of the universe go to work for you. Committing your plan to paper re-

fines and expands ideas. This focus becomes a magnet for additional opportunities. Because you’ve outlined the end result, the steps along the way actually become clearer.

Napoleon Hill, America’s foremost success/motivation author, wrote: “Reduce your plan to writing. The moment you complete this, you will have definitely given concrete form to the intangible desire.” Or, as Tom Landry, the NFL’s third winningest coach of all time put it: “Setting a goal is not the main thing. It is deciding how you will go about achieving it and staying with that plan.”

Three Common PR Myths

Myth One: You need a big budget.

Advertising sales wisdom suggests you buy the audience. “Run more spots.” “Mail more prospects.” “Buy more display.” That’s PUSH sales. The solution for too much product and not enough traffic: buy more advertising. In traditional public relations, businesses look at clips. Every time your story gets published you add it to the clip pile. Meanwhile, the PR specialist PUSHES your pitch to dozens or hundreds of journalists. (In the email world we call this spam.)

These techniques fail more often than not today. PULL marketing means consumers select their medium and in some cases even their message. You purchase an appliance like a washer, return the warranty card, check the box to receive direct mail offers, and hear about soap from a different company. In this sce-

nario, you choose to no longer receive washer offers. “Dear Occupant,” mail is the opposite of PULL marketing. (NOTE: Impersonal email blasts are today’s “Dear Occupant.” Emails to 10 people may save you time, but they hardly get the message across.)

My dad, a farmer, used to make an analogy about one-quarter inch. “A quarter inch on the end of a mile-long fence line is nothing,” he’d say. Then he’d add, “A quarter inch on the end of your nose is a LOT!” So, treat your PR as if it were your nose. It is. Make your quarter inch count. Talk specifically and emphatically with two journalists, not twenty. Spend more time in the planning stage than in the outreach stage. It will pay dividends. Remember, it’s relative.

Myth Two: You can’t reach journalists.

Blasting 700 messages out on the web doesn’t work. It’s unlikely you’ll get seven responses, let alone 70. What to do? Develop your points and then send seven targeted, specific pitches. You’ll likely get three to four responses.

Who do you know? Posting your question on a Facebook page would be more effective than unsolicited email blasts. I’m suggesting you develop a specific strategy and it begins with thinking. Less is more in this case.

One non-profit committee chair assigned each person to contact someone they knew at media outlets. She provided a flyer with talking points. The result? Her event received widespread coverage. The power of personal relationships added an oomph she couldn’t achieve on her own.

How can you think differently about contacting the media?

Do you have a favorite columnist? Is there a particular publication you follow all the time? Focus on making your message relevant for the publication’s or the column’s audience and you’re on the way to success. Do your research and make the contacts. Journalists want to hear from business people like you who have a story to tell.

Tell a succinct story to select people and end the “can’t reach journalists” myth.

Myth Three: You must have special expertise.

It doesn’t work that way. You know your product or service. With a little focus you can put together a pitch that works. Scratch expertise and replace it with passion. You must have a passion for getting the word out. In the words of Calvin Coolidge:

“Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan ‘press on’ has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.”

Act now. Move forward in some small way and get the word out.

Set aside PR myths and act now. Move forward in some small way and get the word out.

“Tell the World!
Step by Step to
Publicity: The
Starter Kit for
Adding an Online
Media Room, Press
Room or News
Center to Your
Website”

Download this
previous special
report at

<http://www.ProfitMeister.com>

PR Puts Your Business on the Map for Free!

“All publicity is good, except an obituary notice,” said Irish playwright Brendan Behan. Publicity, or “free” press, can be more valuable than some paid advertising campaigns because media coverage carries credibility. A spotlight on your business with an article, picture or news segment promotes you in many ways.

If you’re in search of free publicity, start here. In less than five minutes, I’ll show you five sectors where you can start getting the word out.

Online Media Room

Across the country traditional media (newspapers, magazines, television and radio) have cut resources to save money. Today’s reporters begin research online, and you can help them, by providing information they can use and access 24/7 on your website. An online media room, or press room on your website, with background information and news about your company can increase your credibility with journalists and consumers. The Internet is critical to your successful publicity campaign.

Action items: Use an online media room to augment your publicity efforts by posting quality content to increase your online presence. See ProfitMeister’s Special Reports or review newsletters from 2008 for more information.

<http://www.ProfitMeister.com>

Creative Story Ideas

Many people have a difficult time seeing what may be newsworthy about their own business. If, for example, your business sponsors annual events for the general or business community, you may have an easy time getting coverage around those events. But many small businesses don’t have “built-in” or obvious story “angles.” Try to see your business as an outsider might: What do people wonder about when they think of your business or how you do what you do? Is there a time of year when your expertise is of special interest?

Let’s take the example of looking for a story idea a couple of months before Halloween. If you have a beauty salon, perhaps you could “pitch” being on a local morning TV show demonstrating how certain hair products can contribute to far-out costume ideas (rigid gels, temporary color rinses, etc.). It isn’t the type of hair styling you normally do, but your salon would be mentioned and you could be seen as a fun, hip place to patronize. If you have a hardware store, perhaps you could pitch the local newspaper on a story about safety in working with leaf blowers, the best features of a new rake, etc.

Papers/Business Journals

List the major print publications in your market. The daily or weekly newspaper may come first to mind. In addition, look for alternative publications that publish weekly, monthly or quarterly. Pay special attention to sections featuring your industry. Notice which journal-

ists write the kind of story that might feature your business, and review some of their past stories to get a feel for their style and the kinds of information they use.

Many cities have a business journal that targets upper management, business owners and professionals. These and other printed publications offer specific print coverage opportunities—including special sections, editorial calendars, letters to the editor, opinion columns or photo requests—in addition to general news and events coverage.

Local Magazines

Magazines offer opportunities similar to those of newspapers for small businesses, except the magazine requires a longer “lead” time to get your information into print.

As you define those publications that have the most importance for your business, consider the magazines your customer reads most often: from news and business to home and fashion. Before you begin to submit information to a particular publication, do your homework and read several back issues. Note the reporters who most often write about subjects such as yours. Turn to the masthead and review the general rules for editorial content. Begin thinking about ideas that could be relevant for your business.

Action items for print: Request an editorial calendar (the publication’s plan for what will be covered in the coming year) for each publication on your target list or

download the calendars from the Internet. The editorial calendar usually outlines special subjects for concentration. Identify your contact for the paper or magazine and research them online. Note the deadlines for information submission for each publication. Keep a log, including when you contacted each publication, what you discussed, and the outcome.

Local Radio

Consider the programs your customers discuss. Many radio stations have morning shows featuring guest appearances. Local personalities may host a talk show or call-in that offers publicity opportunities. Take note of the time and requirements for each.

For example, one radio personality in our area offers a Friday night shout-out. From 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm, listeners can call in and say their spiel at no charge. If, however, the participant is unprepared, this host may cut them off. (NOTE: Because of interaction, the segment is quite entertaining.)

Local TV/Cable Shows

If your story impacts a lot of people, consider TV. Frequently, local stations allow promotion during particular segments of the morning show or a noon-time segment. Some stations may even produce an entertainment feature that highlights local business. Discover the guidelines for coverage by calling stations in advance.

Editorial calendars outline special focus for publications. Develop your own editorial calendar by month for your organization.

Task lists take the weight out of “to do.” Use this One Week Project” to develop a task list for your PR.

Action items for broadcast: Get the name of the TV newsroom assignment editor and re-confirm it each time you send information. Ask about public service announcements and observe the policy. Inquire about user-generated video. Check for the producer’s name and contact information. Keep a log of your contacts and document each outcome.

Summary

Your commitment to getting the word out with news and events at your firm will serve you well in the months ahead. Pick your outlets, begin using a mix of methods to distribute your information, and you’ll build coverage you can smile about. It may take more than one try, but I’m confident your persistence will pay off.

Do-It-Yourself PR: The One Week Project

“PR” - public relations - seems so BIG it can stop you cold. In the midst of running your business, doing what you do best, self-promotion can take a back seat to sales. And yet, promotion can maximize sales.

The vicious cycle of thinking about the many aspects of promoting your business leads many entrepreneurs to overwhelm, worry and finally, analysis paralysis. I worked with one artist to tackle perceptual problems and make PR a realistic part of her week. We developed this calendar:

Day One:

- ◆ *Identify three print and three online targets. List your own website as the #4 online target. Research to discover your best contact at each target.*
- ◆ *Check every target’s website.*
- ◆ *Download editorial calendars where appropriate.*
- ◆ *Make a list of deadlines.*
- ◆ *Note the reporter covering your industry. Google them and read their work.*

Day Two:

- ◆ *Develop a paragraph – three to five sentences about you, your event, your reason for seeking publicity.*
- ◆ *Now, change this paragraph slightly for each target outlet.*
- ◆ *Re-write the same paragraph for your website.*

Day Three:

- ◆ *Prepare a background sheet about your event.*
- ◆ *Answer each of the five W and one H questions: who, what, when, were, why, and how.*
- ◆ *Edit each answer to a short bullet. Elaborate only if necessary.*

Day Four:

- ◆ *Contact your six targets via email.*
- ◆ *In a simple statement, make your request.*

- ◆ *Include your contact information in each email: name, phone number, email and address.*
- ◆ *Paste your fact sheet in below your signature line. Do NOT add an attachment to your email.*
- ◆ *Post your fact sheet on your website in your online media room.*

Day Five:

- ◆ *Evaluate your daily efforts on a scale of one to 5, with one being the strongest and five the weakest. Note where you might increase your effectiveness.*
- ◆ *Begin to formulate your next "story."*
- ◆ *Focus on an upcoming event, product launch, anniversary or other opportunity.*
- ◆ *Consider why this story is of interest to each target. (HINT: Think about that target's audience.)*

Busy and overwhelm aside, get your public relations project moving with this simple, one-hour-per-day calendar plan and let me know how it works for you.

Cross Promote: Leverage PR for Results

Liken the concept of cross promote to the follow-through in your golf swing. If you received press coverage in traditional media, take full advantage of it by linking to that coverage from your own website and showcasing it in other ways.

Case Study in Cross-Promotion: EXHIB-IT! TradeShow Marketing Experts

D.J. Heckes, CEO of EXHIB-IT! sent out a traditional news release about a GSA contract award early in February. Here's the release:

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

DATE: January 26, 2009

Contact: Nancy Reimann, 505-828-0574;
E-mail: marketing2@exhib-it.com

ABQ Business Survives and Thrives In Spite Of Economic Crunch, Lands \$150K GSA Contract

EXHIB-IT! Trade Show Marketing Experts, a WBE-Certified Woman-owned business headquartered in Albuquerque, has landed a \$150,000 national GSA contract from the United States Department of Agriculture to produce portable exhibits and graphic panels for 47 USDA locations nationwide.

"Receiving this large government contract shows that there is business out there," says company owner and CEO DJ Heckes. "But finding the right opportunity and delivering on the opportunity in a timely manner is what is needed to be successful."

EXHIB-IT Tradeshow Marketing Experts is also listed as a GSA Certified Small Business. And Heckes credits her small-business acumen, along with a strong, focused and positive-minded business

Cross promote.
Make your marketing work harder as you leverage publicity across channels.

Use your website to talk with your customers, showcase company solutions, information, opinions, events. Tell stories!

plan, as the keys to her success despite a nationwide economic downturn.

Being a small business in today's economy is a plus in that a small business can offer the same things that larger businesses do, but with more service and better prices, Heckes says. She credits her company's record breaking growth in the midst of economic challenges to continued positivity and exemplary customer service. "If you, as a business owner, choose to focus on the negative forces surrounding the business community rather than opportunity and service to customers, you'll find that your revenue goals are harder to reach," she says. "Not because you are battling with the economy, but because you are battling your own excuses."

Her no-nonsense expertise has been widely sought by business professionals nationwide, assisting them in marketing, business development, and leadership skills.

Heckes' company, EXHIB-IT! has won many national awards due to Heckes' leadership role in her business and in her ongoing training – and level of trustworthiness – of her staff. Heckes is Past President of the NM American Marketing Association and currently serves on the National American Marketing Association Board as a Professional Chapter Council Representative. In this position she travels to other marketing chapters and helps them to grow by mentoring the Chapter Presidents.

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The story made daily headlines in the *New Mexico Business Weekly* (owned by American Cities Journals) and was also picked up by the *Albuquerque Journal's Business Outlook*. To maximize this exposure, I suggested EXHIB-IT! link to the coverage from its online media room.

This easy-to-execute-idea offers visitors "insider information" which may sway them to make a purchase. Positive press carries additional weight in the minds of many prospects.

Cross-promotion makes for good business. It exposes your business to other audiences and lets you brag without appearing to do so. (When you say it, it's a claim...when others say it, it's fact.)

Thus, when you leverage your publicity, you gain additional weight, more influence and greater credibility. At the very least, you maximize your exposure in one medium across other channels. So, the question is: Have you taken full advantage of your visibility?

Online Media Launches PR

Talk Effectively About Your Company to Media and Others with an Online Media Room on Your Website

Reluctant publicists run many firms. You probably know several such people. (You may even fit the category yourself.) If comments like these sound familiar, a reluctant publicist can't be far behind:

- ◆ *“Where do I begin? Who would care about my story anyway?”*
- ◆ *“Running a business takes everything I’ve got; why, I rarely see my family and you expect me to handle my own publicity? Don’t be thinking I can hire it done, either. Not in these times.”*
- ◆ *“I talked with a friend who knows somebody at the paper. They wanted some kind of media kit. I’ve never done one of those.”*

The realities of communicating with media seem overwhelming and yet represent one of your company’s biggest opportunities. The Internet lets you promote directly to customers. A web storefront with an online media room, a place where you post news information about your company, puts you in charge of your own publicity, thus making for effective communication.

Experts estimate more than 70% of reporters begin their research on the web. Online media rooms position your company to be at the forefront of a campaign simply because your information is available. Naturally, this requires accountability of a different sort:

1. You’re in charge
2. You determine the message
3. You set the pace

For the reluctant publicist, the business owner who says “I’m not used to thinking this way,” the initial steps can intimidate. Refuse to go there. Instead, think

about your product or service and connect with your passion.

You’re in Charge

“Once you get clear and focused about what you do best, it’s easy,” says Karen Van Cleve, Anthony Robbins Results Coach. “Even with a lot to do, I find it’s still about coaching. My marketing works when I connect or help my clients connect. For example, one client defined her niche, got clear about who her background could serve, and booked five speaking engagements for March.”

Rebecca Keller, author and publisher at Gravitas Publications underestimated her ability to influence. Consistent, standing-room-only crowds at her speaking engagements indicated she had something to say. When she changed her thinking to “How can I get this message to hundreds of people?” her publicity began to shift.

Like Karen or Rebecca, you’re in charge. When you decide to generate publicity for your company, your focus causes something to happen. I’m convinced that the decision itself makes a difference.

An online media room allows you to communicate directly with your customers and prospects. As you position news about events, awards, and future plans, you drive the focus of a variety of audiences including the general public, your employees, customers, stakeholders and, of course, the media.

Online media rooms:

1. You’re in charge;
2. You determine the message;
- and 3. You set the pace.

Do one thing daily
to move your
online media room
forward. What's on
the list for today?

Your Message

Because you produce information for your online media room, you can emphasize key points as appropriate for your company schedule. For example, if your product catalog is delayed, make the PDF available online and then post a news release directing traffic to a particular page.

Casey Hibbard posted stories on her blog about information resources and then linked to them. When her book, *Stories That Sell* launched she took a different approach by soliciting feedback from the audience with each post. Many of the tools she outlined were featured in her book. The blog created additional interest and helped generate more sales.

In addition, a Media Room for *Stories That Sell* offers cover art, an author photo, a sample chapter, the table of contents, and a news release about how the book soothes nervous buyers by showcasing happy customers.

(www.storiesthatsellguide.com/media.php)

In a tough economy, Casey has positioned her book as an investment, not an expense.

Gravitas Publications launched an online media room with a concentration on "message" and a plan for each month's news release. Over the course of a year, Rebecca included newsletters, e-books and blog postings in her campaign. Website hits and sales are up and a Yahoo! group following now totals 1100-plus.

Nothing happened overnight, but by the end of a year she had netted a couple of feature stories and a published article. Rebecca now has a plan for monthly content and directs other writers to polish and publish for her. Postings on Wiki and other applications give additional traction or visibility to her efforts.

Your Pace

The small business owners mentioned in this newsletter face the same challenges as you. Each woman reported non-linear progress to me. Yet, by breaking difficult tasks into small pieces, each made progress.

Building an online media room could seem like an onerous task, but writing one press release to post this week might be doable. Or, gather your photos and develop a punchy biographical sketch. Ask yourself: "What am I trying to accomplish?" The answer to this question points to your highest priority.

"The important thing is to do just one small NEW thing at a time," Karen Van Cleve, Anthony Robbins success coach, emphasized. "If you're overwhelmed, try shifting the proportion of your work. Do less of the new and focus more on what you do best. You'll feel calmer and more in control."

Summary

In a few minutes you can make a detailed list of all the items you might include in an online media room. Then, do one thing each day or each week to move it closer to reality.

Online Media Room: How do I Know it's Working?

The online media room communicates 24/7 from your website or a link to your home page. It tells your story to the world wide web audience as well as to customers, employees, stakeholders and, of course, the media.

A year ago, Cynthia Morris put together an online media room for her company, Original Impulse (<http://www.originalimpulse.com>). Yesterday she asked me the big question: "How do I know it's working?"

"Have you had results?" I asked.

"I'm not sure," she laughed, and I heard the serious question behind the statement. "How would I know?"

If you're trying to determine if your online media room works, consider these thoughts:

Web traffic. I encourage people to use Google Analytics and Google Webmaster Tools. These free tools offer powerful information about your website. You can look at your traffic and discover where it comes from, the patterns of users once they find you and how long they stay. The benefits far outweigh the learning curve. Google manages to make it simple enough for a non-techie like me.

Results. Have you had feedback about your media room? (Did you ask for any?) Cynthia was recently interviewed by an Australian radio personality who discovered her from a friend's link on Facebook. It's highly likely the reporter also

did her homework and looked at background info from the media room and other parts of the website. Traditionally public relations used "clips" to measure effectiveness. Clients judged success by the number of different stories published. By all means, continue to look for stories in traditional media as well as on the web, but don't stop there.

Promotion. If you sent the link to a journalist and they replied, that's feedback, whether or not a story developed. Part of your responsibility is to promote yourself. Have you updated your media room lately? Consider publishing your news on some of the free news sites on the web (see page 15) and pointing people to your media room. Consider links from blog posts, articles, or social networking sites. Can people find you on the web?

PR comparison. What kind of public relations did you do prior to your media room? Compare those results. Frequently we expect a dramatic increase simply because we got organized and got started. Unfortunately, putting the media room online is only the beginning of the work.

Optimized. According to the Free Dictionary, optimized means to make as perfect or as effective as possible. Your media room offers an ongoing place for quality content (and the search engines love content). As you continually publish and upgrade your content, you can examine strategies that further attract search engines: keyword rich headlines, for example, and copy containing key phrases.

Five things to check:

Web traffic

Results

Promotion

PR comparison

Optimized

Use awards, recognition and other publicity to add to your credibility.

My friend Cynthia says, "I love being interviewed." Hey, who doesn't? If you plan for interviews, and continually put yourself out there, they will happen. Count on it. In fact, if you do the online media room right, you may read about yourself on the web.

Meanwhile, I'm in collecting mode. If you've got another way to track success for your online media room, let me know. I'm collecting stories.

Awards, Recognition and Other Publicity Add to Your Credibility

Thunderous applause, fabulous trophies, medals and citations and most importantly, print recognition for you and your company that's difficult to buy. These are the byproducts of awards.

Every year hundreds of honors recognize leadership, service work, outstanding achievement, sales success, women-owned businesses, professional development, community service and more. Your decision to expand your visibility might simply mean applying for awards in your local community, state or trade organization.

Here are five tips to help you succeed in your quest:

Plan Ahead

The elements required for each award differ, and yet some of the background information can be gathered in advance. A good bit of the time involved in submitting an important application goes

into organizing information the first time around. For example, while you may have five or six versions of a bio, it could be more difficult to list your accomplishments by year. Or, if you have testimonials, it might be important to track customers or vendors who would go into greater detail about how you worked to solve their problem.

[The Small Business Administration](#) offers a series of awards each year during National Small Business Week in May. Nominations for these awards are due in November of the preceding year and winners know their status in April. (It's not uncommon to apply six months in advance for an award.)

Applying for an award is no guarantee of winning it, or even being acknowledged for the work involved.

Some industries provide a listing of awards available as do a few communities. For the most part, you must research this information on your own.

Read the Fine Print

Check the criteria, review the application and study the organization before beginning. If possible, talk with a previous winner. You may discover some organizations require membership in order to be considered. Others give preference to those nominated by other organizations, rather than individuals. The National Association of Women Business Owners, NAWBO, frequently encourages its members to apply for specific awards in their community.

As you research awards, keep in mind that you may have to call on the same person more than once to nominate you. Be considerate of the time involved in producing a nomination. Whenever possible, provide complete information, making the nominator's job smooth and hassle-free.

Customize Your Entry

Customize your entry to the specific questions on the application. If the question is about community service, your strength in sales may not matter. If participants are judged on contributions to legislative concerns, someone not in the political arena could be disqualified. One word answers won't earn recognition. The nominations that win are clear, concise and offer strong reasons in favor of the candidate.

Proof

Proof your work and submit prior to the deadline. In a tight competition, typos and misspelled words make the difference. (Imagine a "Women on the Move" application that referenced the YMCA instead of the YWCA.) In some cases, late applications are disqualified.

Never Give Up

In story after story, companies and businesses owners win awards the second or third time they apply. Why? Because you get better with practice.

So go ahead. Apply for an award. Gather your information and vow to put yourself "on the map."

Respond to the Economy with Inexpensive Grassroots Marketing

Talk of cut-backs and stimulus plans dominate today's conversations. Most businesses adjust spending to compensate for flattening revenues. However, expenditures by themselves don't tell the whole story.

Case Study: Slate Street Café, Albuquerque

Grassroots marketing becomes MORE important in a tight economy. I talked with a number of businesses about the changes they've implemented. Albuquerque restaurateur Myra Ghattas told me [Slate Street Café](#) is doing simple things more effectively and, in the process, enhancing its marketing efforts:

- ◆ *Table tents in the dining room advertise events and specials. Customers can read these items as they wait to be served.*
- ◆ *Waiters and waitresses collect email addresses from their guests. The growing e-mail list is used to announce new menus, wine tastings, and special events.*
- ◆ *Myra continues her traditional public relations outreach. Sunset Magazine showcased wine recommendations from her in the January 2009 issue.*
- ◆ *Because that article is in Sunset's web archives, Myra can now link to it from her website.*

Grassroots marketing expands your impact.

“Whatever you’re selling, the ability to establish trust and confidence is critical and sets you apart from the competition.”

Casey Hibbard
Stories That Sell

- ◆ *She might promote the wine recommendations in her e-newsletter.*
- ◆ *A table tent in the wine loft could promote special prices for those recommendations, creating more visibility.*
- ◆ *Myra could send article reprints to customers as a point of interest.*
- ◆ *She might highlight these recommendations with further commentary during her wine classes.*
- ◆ *She could mention the article or any of its specific recommendations on the Slate Street fan club page on Facebook.*

Every one of these ideas represents outreach potential for the restaurant. None of them could be effective without strong implementation backed by that most important grassroots effort of customer interaction. As owner, Myra walks the restaurant floor and talks with her guests, thus demonstrating outreach.

Smart operators, like Myra, know relationships are key to success. At Slate Street, or in most retail operations, customers like to see and talk with the owner. This means an investment of time, and yet this solution is often overlooked as an idea too simple to make a real difference.

Myra points to the importance of talking with customers and letting them know you need their support. In addition, she emphasizes the necessity of providing talking points to the staff, sharing information they can discuss with their guests as appropriate.

I asked Myra what advice she’d give to other businesses:

“...if you are an owner or general manager, you will need to work more, smarter, and harder. You have to set the example by putting in extra effort. You have to show your employees and your customers that you want to be here and you want to survive and that you are going to do whatever it takes to make it.”

Customer Stories: Share NOT Scare

Stories connect us to customers, friends, the world. What stories do you tell? In a B2B world, do your actions create stories that scare rather than stories to share?

One client required precise design work for a project. A known vendor completed the job, producing a file with no style consistency. Some paragraphs justified right, others left; some were spaced evenly, others randomly; various fonts and sizes of headlines appeared throughout the text. In spite of a number of revisions, the final product did not work. What story did the client tell others about this experience?

Another vendor sold a web product. At each meeting, the vendor asked for client input. He listened carefully and communicated an understanding of the changes that needed to be made. Many meetings later, nothing had happened. In spite of a pleasing one-on-one relationship, no results told a different tale. What story did the client tell others about this experience?

A third vendor listened to a project request. The organization needed help. Like many non-profits, there was no money and little recognition. The question from the organization: "Would you help us put together and execute a marketing plan?" With no hesitation, the vendor said, "I'd love to." What story did the client tell about the experience? If you guessed story #3 as the story to share, you're correct.

I've told dozens of people about that call. The positive attitude, the immediate follow through and the consistent repetition of the two make it a pleasure to do business and tell the story. What stories do clients share about you?

Grow Online Visibility: Post Press Releases Free on the Web

"Free" lures as nothing else can. Even responsible professionals stop to investigate when the promise of unlimited returns beckon.

General Observations:

- ◆ *Not every site is easy to navigate. You must investigate the options and rules for each site because they differ.*
- ◆ *Many free press release sites don't offer a hyperlink to your website. This eliminates one of the most useful features of any online offering: inbound links which have the potential to increase your search engine ranking.*

- ◆ *Many free sites do not mask email addresses and thus generate unwanted spam.*
- ◆ *No free press release posting guarantees success; free doesn't equate with effective.*
- ◆ *Be prepared to spend considerable time in your set-up effort. In four hours, I tested ten sites for this newsletter and discovered a number of free press release sites pose as "come-ons" for a paid service.*
- ◆ *Use free press releases in conjunction with other tactics for optimum results.*

10 Free Online PR Sites

1888PressRelease.com, a Houston, TX area firm, offers limited options for its free release. It took about thirty minutes to finalize my options. For example, 1888PressRelease.com let me post a 600-character description about the company. (A free company page is one of this site's differentiators.) The website tried to upgrade my release a number of times. When it posted, it did so with free social media tags.

Ecommwire.com let me register. Because the site did not confirm a password for me to set up an account, I could not access additional options.

Free-News-Release.com never accepted my submission. After three tries I quit although this site has received high marks from other reviewers.

Free-press-release-center.info states the power of their service is in its keyword linking. The site offers an option for a

Post your news release on your own website. Frequently updated, quality content is an asset.

Small PR budgets expand with options like free PR sites.

keyword URL to appear as a link different than the company's primary URL, a desirable option for those websites with multiple landing pages. In addition, a blog post noted the company has a Twitter account as of February 20, 2009.

i-newswire.com let me set up my release quickly and easily. The company states its mission as announcing newsworthy information. Like many of the other free sites, this one offers an upgrade option but allows you to select free on its front page. The free service includes no hyperlinks but complete URLs can be listed in the copy. In addition, this site gives no tracking or geographic distribution options.

MediaSyndicate.com let me complete my submission, although I could never confirm the posting or receipt of the release. The FAQs on this site make it clear that press releases with dollars attached to them receive greater consideration than those submitted for free. In addition, the word "moderated" appears more than once, leading one to question whether your release will actually post.

OpenPR.com advertises itself as a portal launched in 2004, maintained by an agency in Hamburg, Germany. Releases can be submitted and posted in less than ten minutes.

PressAbout.com provides a press release solution in the form of a blog using WordPress. One could assume the site is under development due to a note on Terms and Conditions which states T&C will be posted soon.

PRInside.com is a website located in Austria for the free submission of public relations distribution, news, and press releases. It's easy to use and posts releases immediately by category. The release can be printed or emailed. (A confirmation for PRInside.com noted the release went live in three minutes and four seconds.)

PRLog.org let me complete and submit a press release in less than 10 minutes. The site is completely free and simple to operate. I got a confirmation including a URL with both an HTML version and a PDF version of my submission in less than 24 hours.

Why use Free PR Sites?

You can improve your company's online presence by using free press releases to direct traffic back to your website. While press release distribution services may not generate specific stories, they will contribute to the overall mentions about your company on the web. Sometimes your posting will catch the attention or interest of a reporter at a perfect time and generate a story or interview as a result. Or, you may find your company is mentioned in a broader topic because your information was available.

Most importantly, a small budget can be extended with careful attention to additional options such as these.

Best Practices

Choose one or two sites from this list and concentrate on them for effectiveness.

In addition to submitting your release online, remember to work your local contacts, submitting information to local publications.

Submit a release to your industry or trade association.

Post your news release on your own website. Frequently updated, quality content is one of the greatest assets for any website.

Business as Unusual: Lose Control of Your Marketing

Lose Control of Your Marketing, a new free e-book from bestselling author David Meerman Scott, should be required reading for every company owner. Scott's last book, *The New Rules of Marketing & PR*, continues to be a bestseller. It discusses reaching buyers directly.

Portions of *Lose Control*, a 33-page e-book taken from *World Wide Rave*, turn typical marketing think on its head.

Scott suggests making your information on the Web totally free for people to access, with absolutely no virtual strings attached: no electronic gates, no registration requirements, and no email address checking.

in his conversational style, Scott discusses companies now using these techniques and ideas for implementing them. As a former media salesperson, I loved page 22, R.I.P. Sales Process.

If we're totally honest, we must know that we no longer control the sales proc-

ess. Such a thing no longer even exists. Instead, our potential customers control what has become a buying process.

We need to realize that, with today's consumer skepticism, we risk failure and irrelevancy by depending on million-dollar direct mail campaigns targeting the top sales prospects, big-budget advertisements that cast too wide a net, or message-drive PR campaigns directed at media insiders who reach fewer readers and viewers than they once did.

If you don't have your own copy of *Lose Control of Your Marketing*, [download](#) it now. Free. Learn Why marketing ROI (return on investment) measures LEAD TO FAILURE!

Stories That Sell: Add the Case Study to Your Outreach Efforts

Case study expert Casey Hibbard teaches her craft in *Stories That Sell*. The book, published early in 2009, offers readers a content-rich, seven-step 'how-to' spiced with examples, diagrams and advice.

Casey's expertise shines through. From industry experts who endorse her to the clients she features, one thing is clear: she's all about helping you turn satisfied customers into your most powerful sales and marketing asset.

Here are Casey's seven steps:

1. *Strategic story planning*
2. *Uncovering customer candidates*
3. *Securing customer permission*

"You can add to the web at any-time because it is iterative, not linear. If you create a web page that doesn't work for you, you can just delete it."

David Meerman Scott,
The New Rules of Marketing & PR

“Even if you have reams of evidence on your side, remember: numbers numb, jargon jars, and nobody ever marched on Washington because of a pie chart. If you want to connect with your audience, tell them a story.”

Andy Goodman,
author
“Storytelling as
Best Practice”



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4. Intelligence gathering
5. *Creating compelling stories*
6. *Story signoff*
7. *Leveraging customer stories*

Of the seven, step #7, leveraging customer stories, is my favorite not only because it's most familiar to me, but also because it's completely and masterfully presented.

Casey touches on blogs and social media, addresses other aspects of the web including search engine optimization and the part case studies can play in it, and then turns her attention to more traditional media.

“Seven Ways to Slice a Customer Story” is a mini case study in the middle of the sub-chapter, “Leveraging Stories to the Media.” In this section her customer Tech Image, a Chicago-area PR firm, showcases seven ways of using success story and case study content:

- ◆ *Complete story*
- ◆ *Quotes*
- ◆ *Story highlights*
- ◆ *Prep clients for it*
- ◆ *Help reporters craft questions and stories*
- ◆ *Contribute articles*
- ◆ *Awards submissions*

“It's usually a three to one ratio, with one case generating at least three pieces of media coverage,” says Bob Dirkes, account manager at Tech Image.

Sub-chapter take-aways reinforce important points here and throughout the book. Quotes inspire and tease the reader to go on.

I've recommended *Stories That Sell* to clients and fellow consultants and use my copy as a personal textbook: highlights, flags and comments across margins mark the copy. *Stories That Sell* is an asset for any bookshelf, and I recommend adding it to your business books. In addition, bookmark Casey's *Stories That Sell* blog or join her LinkedIn Group, Success Story Marketing.

Conclusion

If you're new to PR, you now have 'how-to.' Begin your own outreach program. You can do this. In fact, it's a must. Keep me posted as you go forward.