

The Publicity Hound

Tips, tricks and tools for free publicity

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How to Pitch College Newspapers

By Ryan A. Schradin



Setting aside images of Animal House, Scompanies now recognize what Anheuser Busch and Domino's have known about for years: The college market is one of the most profitable targets for public relations and marketing efforts.

So get your number 2's sharpened... it's time for a lesson in effectively reaching this spending group!

Freshman orientation

Do some preliminary research into which colleges and universities are ripe for your message. You'll find information about campus size, student enrollment, demographics and campus history in the Admissions or About sections of any campus' website.

While perusing the site, stop by the Student Life page for information on the student-run newspaper. If you're lucky, it will include a link to their homepage and the editor's name and contact info.

Once you identify the schools right for you, it's time to create a pitch or release.

The one-page pitch

When deciding to write a release or pitch letter to college media, consider:

1. Is this hard or soft news?
2. Is there an interview opportunity or product demo?

If you are pitching soft news requiring a reporter to interview an executive or take a product demo, write an interesting and concise pitch letter. If you are pitching hard news that doesn't require an interview or other action by the editor or reporter, just give them the release.

Keep pitches concise. Try to incorporate humor and even, dare we say, a bit of youth into your headline. If you're a little square, have a younger, cooler and more in-touch colleague give it a try. Remember that college folks want to get your brand. They want to feel like you get them, too.

Final exams & commencement

Since student journalists have to be on campus to write an article, check the academic calendar at the website. It shows when breaks, holidays, major exams, and even hard-to-prepare-for parties are scheduled. Don't send releases and make follow-up calls on these days, or you risk being berated by a post-party animal.

If school is in session, it's best to fire off story ideas or releases via email to the editor and follow up by phone.

Contacting students at the college newspaper office can feel like trying to nail tapioca to the ceiling. Remember that college types keep very different schedules than professionals. Follow-up calls in the morning are probably not going to result in more than a machine message, and students are in class in the early afternoon. Call in the evening, after most classes end, and be persistent. Weekends work.

Be sure your pitch is centered on how students at that school will benefit from knowing about -- and using -- your company, organization or product. Knowing trends and specifics about a campus is helpful. Knowing that a school has won a berth in the Final Four will make your pitch about a computerized basketball shoe more appealing. Being aware of U2's upcoming concert might incite a joke in your pitch about Bono's newly-announced clothing line. Just as you tune pitches to journalists according to their environment, do it with college media.

Ryan Schradin is an account executive at RLM Public Relations. Visit their website at www.rlmpr.com.

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— Ryan A. Schradin

How an Adventure Coach Got Into TIME



When a reporter for TIME magazine went looking for sources for the May 16 cover story on how women survive—and thrive—during a midlife crisis, she ended up at Jenn Wright’s websites.

Jenn calls herself an adventure coach. She takes mid-life women on inner/outer journeys in various locations, including New Zealand. Her websites at www.midlifeheroine.com and www.midlifeadventure.com include the keywords “mid-life women,” “midlife women” and “mid-life crisis.”

“I also had a compelling bio that linked into my business,” Jenn said.

After several email messages and phone calls, Jenn interviewed with the reporter at 6 a.m. New Zealand Time, while talking on a cellphone on the front porch of a cabin. “A week later, I got a phone call from New York asking about taking photographs.”

A three-hour photo shoot resulted in a giant photo on TIME’s web page and a full-page photo in the May 16 issue. Several inches of copy told the

story of how Jenn, at age 46, took an intense backpacking adventure trip to Nevada with her 21-year-old son. At the time, she was a divorced assistant professor of occupational therapy in Indianapolis. The confidence she acquired on that trip inspired her to move to—of all places—New Zealand.

Interviewing with TIME taught her several lessons:

- “More is less. Having a simple website with a compelling message brought TIME to find me.”
- “Be passionate about what you do. This passion reflected in my webpage, and in my interview.”
- “The story is theirs. Listen for what they are asking and what they want from you. The writer wanted my own story first, and shifting to my business would not have been appropriate. I was able to add things about my business as I saw a place to do so, but not until.”
- Correct inaccuracies via a letter to the editor. “I was called a travel guide. I am an adventure coach.” Her letter thanked them for the story and corrected the error.

If TIME magazine visited your website today, would a reporter be inclined to call you?

“Interviewing with TIME taught Jenn several lessons. Among them: The story is theirs. Listen for what they are asking and what they want from you.”

—Joan Stewart
The Publicity Hound

Your Letters



“Other” Media Can Open Doors

Everyone wants to be in The Wall Street Journal. There’s no denying that well-known, national media outlets are critical in communicating a message and driving results. That’s no reason to overlook the literally millions of other outlets that can be just as influential in achieving your specific objectives.

Internet sites, blogs and newsletters are all increasingly important in targeting opinion leaders and decision makers. Peer-to-peer newsletters are especially useful in reaching those who recommend and choose technology products and services.

We recently began outreach to state technology education councils for our client, Lightspeed Systems. We targeted state markets that Lightspeed has recently entered or will soon enter to expand sales of its security software. We chose to position Lightspeed’s president as an authority on computer security through a bylined article

that recently appeared in the Organization for Educational Technology and Curriculum’s winter newsletter at www.oetc.org/protecting.html.

Over 10,000 IT administrators and other education technology decision-makers in Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, California, Wyoming and Montana receive this newsletter. Readers’ response to the article led Washington’s state technology association to invite Lightspeed to demonstrate its software to district IT administrators—an ideal opportunity to directly reach potential users and buyers.

The right message in the right place at the right time will open the right door. A strategic, aggressive communications program will knock as often as necessary to drive your business goals.

John Jordan
Principor Communications
Washington, D.C.

How to Create Publicity from Thin Air

By Bill Stoller

In an ideal world, your business would be overflowing with newsworthy stories, and the media would be waiting with bated breath for your next press release, ready to give you front page coverage.

In the real world, however, it's not always so easy to generate real news. So what do top publicists do to get news coverage for clients who have no news to share? They create publicity from thin air:

Start a Hall of Fame

There are two reasons for you to take a look at www.publicityinsider.com/HallOfFame.asp, my very own Public Relations Hall of Fame. First, it's filled with examples of companies that have created great publicity stories from thin air. And second, it's an example of a time-honored publicity technique—the Hall of Fame.

It couldn't be easier. For your field, create a Hall of Fame, induct some of your industry's top luminaries, and send a press release. You don't need a marble-columned building or bronze plaques. A simple press release (and maybe a supporting website similar to the Public Relations Hall of Fame) will do the trick. Each year, induct more members and send out another release. Really, it's that simple.

Make a List

Mr. Blackwell made himself a household name with a simple "Worst Dressed List." And the "Most Boring People of the Year" list that gets huge press every year. It's the creation of a single, very clever publicist from New Jersey. And take a look at one of the more recent lists to get massive publicity—the Most Annoying People of the Year from AmIAnnoying.com at www.amiannoying.com/2002/mostandleast.aspx.

The media simply devour lists. The best, the worst, the most, the least, the top 10, the bottom 10, whatever.

Craft an Index

Here's a neat variation on the list concept. Essentially a twist on the government's cost of

living index, a publicity index is a fun way to quantify a trend.

For example, back in my agency days, one of our clients was the company that imported Moët Champagne. Somewhere along the line, a very sharp publicist had a brainstorm, and invented "The Moët Index." It was basically a list of some

luxury items—such things as a Maine lobster, a jar of Russian caviar, a diamond bracelet and, of course, a bottle of Moët—with the total cost of all the items if one were to

purchase them. The number was compared with the amount they would have cost last year, and the year before and—voilà!—the Moët Index was born. It purported to ask the question "How much more expensive is living the good life this year as opposed to previous years?" Moët had a nice annual story. They simply tallied up the new numbers each year, distributed a press release, sat back and counted the clippings.

Create a Petition

Is there a hot topic in your industry? A growing controversy? Something people would like to see happen that's not taking place? Create a petition! Thanks to the Internet, starting a petition drive is a breeze. No need to stand outside supermarkets with a clipboard. Just provide a link for your visitors and you're off and running! Sites such as PetitionOnline.com at www.petitiononline.com/petition.html allow anyone to start a petition for free.

Bill Stoller, the "Publicity Insider", has spent two decades as one of America's top publicists. Now, through his website, ezine and subscription newsletter, Free Publicity: The Newsletter for PR-Hungry Businesses, he's sharing his secrets of scoring big publicity. Visit his website at www.publicityinsider.com.



Briefs



Weekend Magazine Debuts

Weekend, the “first lifestyle magazine entirely dedicated to weekend living,” according to Hearst president Cathleen P. Black, hits the newsstands June 14, with a distribution of 500,000 copies and cover price of \$3.99.

Susan Wyland, former editor of Lifetime, Real Simple and Martha Stewart Living, is editor-in-chief. Content includes food, entertaining, travel, decorating, organizing and ideas on how to spend your personal time, both at home and away. A second issue is scheduled for mid-August.

The magazine is divided into two sections—”Weekend at Home” and “Weekend Away”—plus a feature well. “Weekend at Home” covers shopping, cooking, easy weekend projects, technology, organizing, and how to learn to do something new. “Weekend Away” features great getaways around the country, day trips, road trips, 3-day adventures, real estate and fashion. The feature well includes weekend homes, travel, entertaining, recipes and decorating.

Be a Productive Blogger

If you’ve just started blogging, and you’re finding it’s eating up most of your day, relax.

Blogger D. Keith Robinson, who writes To-Done!, a blog about personal productivity, work/life balance and getting things done, has lots of tips on how to make blogging more productive:

- Stick to a publishing schedule
- Keep an idea file
- Take advantage of your creative highs
- Take a few days off
- Don’t sweat the small stuff, like grammar and punctuation

Read his entire list of tips at www.to-done.com/2005/05/be-a-more-productive-blogger/.

The Publicity Hound

Says...



Things we can learn from a dog: When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them gently.

Podcasters, Experts Unite

With podcasting exploding worldwide, new opportunities are being created for specialized shows to address subjects traditional radio has refused to.

Podcasters are looking for guests for their shows. Authors, experts and interview subjects are always looking for more exposure for books, products, websites, and other projects. Now, to fill both those needs there is PodcastGuests.com.

It’s a simple concept: podcasters and potential guests simply register to be included in the online database. Then, either can browse by podcast or guest category to contact and arrange appearances.

Registration is free for both podcasters and guests. If you’re a publicist, you can list as many separate authors or potential guests you have—not just now, but in the future. For more information or to register, visit www.podcastguests.com.

Don’t Use the Word ‘Film’

George McKenzie, publisher of the Publicity Pro ezine, warns against using the word “film” when you’re talking to TV people. As in “Will you be able to send someone out to film our event?”

“The word ‘film’ identifies you as hopelessly out of touch, behind the times and probably not worth wasting any effort on,” George says.

Film hasn’t been used in TV news for more than 25 years (in most places anyway). It has completely slipped from the vocabulary of working TV people.

Using the word “tape” is still OK, but even that may pass into history soon as more and more news operations go digital. To be safe, use the words “shoot” or “cover” instead. For example, “Will be able to send someone over to shoot our bake sale?” or “Can we expect someone to cover the meeting?”

Saying “film” when you mean “cover” won’t necessarily ruin your chances of getting publicity, but it’s definitely a red flag.

To subscribe to George’s ezine, The Publicity Pro newsletter, send a blank email to: george2-13184@sendtheinfo.com.

Doggone Clever Open House Lures Visitors

By Kathleen Hall

By the time guests arrived at Graphics Gallery's open house, they felt like they already knew Buddha, the owner's puppy and company mascot. As a pup, Buddha became the foundation for Graphics Gallery's successful promotional and marketing efforts, proving that a simple theme—well executed—can make the difference between a campaign that's flat and one that has heart.

Graphics Gallery is a large-format printer that wanted to showcase its new capabilities in a fun way. It made sense to host an event so guests could see firsthand the realm of creative possibilities. Everyone loves puppies. And Buddha, a Bernese Mountain dog, was a member of the Graphics Gallery team. We took professional photos of Buddha and launched our marketing campaign.

We wanted to build interest and excitement long before the event so we created save-the-date cards, "Ask me about..." buttons and, of course, an invitation. All promotions featured Buddha and incorporated dog-related copy. The combination of photos of the puppy, the unusual colors of Graphics Gallery's logo (green, black and orange) and creative design work produced truly eye-catching material.

The save-the-date cards featured Buddha sitting on a calendar with his paw on the open house date. The copy read:

I won't be the only thing that's bigger on April 19! Save the date and join the pack at Graphics Gallery. It won't be your typical Dog Day afternoon.

The invitation copy included:

In the dog-eat-dog world of BIG graphics, Graphics Gallery is one of the BIG dogs! Come see for yourself.

At the open house, we continued the dog theme in ways that showcased Graphics Gallery's capabilities:

- The front of the reception desk in the lobby featured a large-format image of a moving New York cab. Buddha was super-imposed in the driver's seat.
- We collected business cards and held drawings for a stuffed Bernese Mountain puppy outfitted with a collar and dog tag that Graphics Gallery produced with its logo. Everyone wanted to win a puppy!

- The restrooms were marked with blue and pink fire hydrants.
- Each piece of equipment was labeled with a stand-up Buddha with the name of the equipment printed in a cartoon bubble.
- The owner created a 9x4 ft. box made of rigid material with interlocking pieces. Each side was printed (on their new printer) with a different image of Buddha. The box was used to hide production material.
- The food included cakes decorated with a photo of Buddha.
- And, of course, Buddha himself greeted guests as they toured the facility.



Buddha, a Bernese Mountain dog, watches as his photo is reproduced on machinery at Graphics Gallery, where he was the hit at a recent open house.

A marketing campaign wouldn't be complete without publicity. Graphics Gallery printed a 4-foot tall picture of Buddha. The angle of the photo made Buddha's nose prominent and the copy read: *We don't mind if you're nosy.* We delivered this to a business reporter at the local newspaper with an invitation to tour Graphics Gallery. The big dog was a big hit in the newsroom and successfully enticed a reporter to visit. He wrote a feature story about Graphics Gallery for our city newspaper. A huge image of Buddha provided the backdrop for an accompanying photo of the owners.

By all measures, the open house was a hit. The turnout was great and the buzz continued long after the event. Although the dog was not directly related to Graphics Gallery's business, he provided a fun, memorable way to turn an otherwise boring open house into one that was pretty doggone successful.

Kathleen Hall, a member of The Publicity Hound Mentor Program, is the owner of Marathon Marketing, a marketing and public relations consulting firm. Kathy is also a freelance writer and writes articles for publications and copy for corporate marketing departments. She can be reached at 804-897-5527 or online at www.marathonmarketingva.com.

Use Hooks to Customize Your Pitches

By Pam Lontos



The key to a better publicity campaign is more articles, more quotes, and more interviews. But every show and every publication is different. So how can one person with one book or one story idea attract the attention of several media outlets?

The answer is simple: a great hook. Adaptation is the foundation for creating your hook. Use these tips to develop your unique hook with each magazine, newspaper, and show you approach.

Why Are You Different?

Sometimes, you must make small changes in your approach. Suppose you've written a book about taking time off for relaxation. Everyone needs relaxation, whether they're at home or work, so you can adapt this topic to fit almost anywhere. But the key is to adapt it for the publication.

In your campaign, say you pitch publications with an article you've written around your subject, entitled "Take Six Months Off." If no one bites with that hook, consider a different angle. Maybe they don't want people in a work environment reading about vacations. Perhaps "Prevent Employee Burnout" would be a more suitable title for the publication's needs. The article could be the same, just a different headline.

Consider the Audience

Media professionals are only concerned with one thing: ratings. When you're pitching to the media, whether it's radio, print, or television, you must think about what interests their audience, not about yourself. Imagine their perspectives and base your hook on their needs.

Make a list of the publications you'd like to pitch, and then think about the headlines you see on the covers. For example, suppose your book addresses hormone imbalances, stress levels and chronic fatigue. Consider the following pitches:

- Woman's World: How Stress Experts De-stress

- Self Magazine: Staying Healthy During Stressful Times
- Parents Magazine: When to Call a Doctor, Warning Signs for Kids
- Wall Street Journal: Reduce Stress at Work, Diet & Exercise Tips
- Ladies Home Journal: Tired All the Time? It Could Be Chronic Stress/Fatigue
- Real Simple Magazine: One-Month Health Make-Over

These different hooks are all on the topic of stress; they are simply adjusted to fit the needs of each specific publication.

Keep With the Times

The final aspect of a winning hook is newsworthiness. Media outlets love to have timely information linked to current events and trends. Start a habit of reading the newspaper and watching the news regularly, and then adapt your ideas to the most cutting-edge information.

Suppose you wrote a book about circulatory health. Low-carb foods have been all over the news for some time, and a research team just discovered a link between heart attacks and individuals who cut complex carbohydrates from their diets. Using your background in health, what does this mean for low-carb dieters? How does this new report affect the public? As an expert, you can answer these questions, so use this to your advantage.

If you want to catch a fish, you have to use the right hook. Apply this same concept to your publicity campaign and develop a winning hook for each media outlet you approach.

Pam Lontos is owner of PR/PR, a public relations firm that specializes in professional speakers and authors. Having been an author, speaker, and former VP of Disney's Shamrock Broadcasting, she knows the ropes of getting good publicity and how to use it to really boost your bookings or book sales. Call for a free consultation at (407) 299-6128 or visit her website at www.prpr.net.

“When you're pitching to the media, whether it's radio, print, or television, you must think about what interests their audience, not about yourself.”

— Pam Lontos

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Help for Hounds

Medical Newswire

<http://medicalnewswire.com/index.shtml>

Medical Newswire will send your press releases announcing financial earnings, job openings, job promotions, product announcements, educational events, and anything the healthcare marketplace would have an interest in learning more about.

Michel Fortin's CopywritersBoard.com

www.copywritersboard.com/

Publicity Hounds who write any kind of copy—for websites, catalogs, ads, flyers, articles, proposals, etc.—will find lots of help at this discussion board. Need feedback or a second opinion? You can ask others to critique your work. Pick up helpful pointers and articles from the pros.

Cool Web Sites



From Book to Bestseller

An insider's guide to publicizing and marketing your book

Whether you're promoting your first book or your fiftieth, *From Book to Bestseller* by Penny



Sansevieri will help you transform your marketing campaign from ordinary to extraordinary. It includes a step-by-step guide to developing the perfect publicity plan, how to get on radio and TV shows, planning a super-successful book signing, secrets to crafting an excep-

tional press kit, how to sell thousand of books through specialty retailers, how to get your book into book clubs, and more. \$18.95. Order from www.amarketingexpert.com/store/.

The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation

Like it or not, grammar is a yardstick with which people measure intelligence and competence. If



you can't write a proper sentence, potential clients may well assume that you aren't smart enough to do business with them. This 104-page paperback book by Jane Straus is well-organized and easy to navigate so you can find what you're looking for quickly,

whether you need to review the rules of capitalization or the finer points of punctuation. I particularly like the grammar exercise and quizzes—a great way to find out if you've retained what you've learned. \$12.95. Available at www.grammarbook.com.

Books, Booklets, Resources

PR News Ezine

This free monthly ezine from PR News brings you up to date on upcoming seminars, awards and the latest features available in PR NEWS, from Publisher Diane Schwartz. She'll keep you in the know with her unique perspective, investigating the headlines, topics and special issues you value the most. Subscribe at www.prandmarketing.com/maillinglistform.htm.

Business Name & Tagline Tutorial

Don't spend thousands of dollars paying somebody else to come up with a business name and tagline for you. Do it yourself with Marcia Yudkin's clever, free tutorial. She walks you through a 19-step tutorial designed to help you create a clever, compelling name and tagline within minutes. Visit www.yudkin.com/generate.htm.

Freebies

Advice

From: Jim Blasingame

Award-winning host of “The Small Business Advocate Show” radio program



The Small Business Advocate Show, which focuses on helping small business owners or those who want to be, is nationally syndicated in 36 radio markets. On the air since 1997, the show is live from 7 to 9 a.m. Monday through Friday, but also heard in other slots on radio, since it's available from a 24/7 satellite channel on ABC Starguide III. In addition to radio, the show is also simulcast live on the Internet, plus two on-demand features.

Jim conducts four interviews each day, totalling more than 1,000 annually. Guests include experts in any area who can offer lots of advice for small businesses. The most popular topics include how to get more business, acquiring capital, dealing with the global economy, technology, health care costs and other employee benefits. Many guests are authors. On-air time for each is 16-18 minutes.

Jim's advice on how to get onto the show:

- Send an email with a very short description of what you'd like to contribute. "If we respond, that means we like what you said. If we don't respond, that means we didn't. We're very picky about who we ask to be on the show."
- Send pitches to Davonna Hickman at dsb@jbsba.com. Jim says an ideal pitch states the issue, as well as the kind of advice the guest will offer as the solution. You can include

several bullet points listing topics you would like to discuss during the interview.

- If you're an author, don't send your book unsolicited. Start with an email pitch. If Jim wants your book, he'll ask for it. If you send him the book, he might get back to you and ask for more information before deciding whether you're a good fit for the show, so be patient.

His pet peeve:

"People who are pushy and presume that just because they've contacted us, that we have to get back to them. If they call or send an email, they can't understand why we haven't gotten back to them within 24 hours. We may not have time to get to your information for two or three weeks."

Jim's Brain Trust:

The Brain Trust is the largest community of small business experts in the world. It includes hundreds of small-business experts who have been on Jim's show. Many of them also have articles posted on Jim's website. Membership in The Brain Trust is by invitation only. To be invited, Jim says "you first must be nice to the host." Then you must convince him you have something important to say and come across well on air. For more information, visit www.SmallBusinessAdvocate.com.

Seasonal Story Ideas



July

Identify movies that are hot, hot, hot this summer. Then piggyback your story ideas off the titles, even if your idea has nothing to do with the movie. This year's summer movies include *The Perfect Man*, *Cinderella Man*, *Madagascar*, *Girls of Summer* and *Boys of Summer*.

Tie your pitch to the word "independence," in honor of Independence Day on July 4. For example, if you're teaching people with big credit card balances how to be smart consumers by cutting up their credit cards, you're teaching independence from credit cards.

If you have a story idea perfect for back-to-school sections in late August, now is the time to pitch it. These sections are often done weeks in advance.

August

If you took an off-the-beaten-path summer vacation—a wine tour of California or an adventure trip where you learned how to live in the wild for three weeks—your local weekly newspaper might want to know about it and write a profile story about you.

How did the summer weather affect your business? If sales were off, what are you doing to make up for it?

If you have a Valentine's Day story to pitch to national magazines, do it now. Competition is fierce for publicity around this holiday, and many national magazines work 6 months ahead.