

SNOHOMISH COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

Published January 2007

Jump-start PR know-how and results in short order

It's a brand new year. You've got a fresh slate to turn your business into a publicity machine that generates favorable headlines that shine a light on your winning ways. In doing so, you can get known, build buzz, earn credibility and generate a path of qualified leads to your door. What growing business doesn't want more of all of that?

If you are a newbie to public relations and need to jump-start your PR know-how, I invite you to subscribe to some excellent and FREE e-zines that will deliver useful, powerful and proven ideas to your e-mail box on a regular basis.

E-zine is short for "electronic magazine." It offers news your readers (clients, prospects and referral sources) can use to run better businesses or live better lives as a result of your expertise. It can be as simple as a free e-mail tip sent to a list of people who have given you permission to market to them online (absolutely no spamming!) or as elaborate as a longer electronic newsletter.

E-zines are powerful because they keep you in front of your audience 26 times a year if you send them biweekly and 52 times a year if you send them weekly. That means you have 52 chances to connect with your readers with quality tips, information and resources while using 20 percent of the content to sell your products and services.

Here are two of my favorite e-zines: www.publicityhound.com and www.prsecrets.com. Make a habit of reading them regularly. You'll learn a lot and be inspired and equipped to get into action with new ideas and resources to catapult your growing business to a higher level of awareness and success.

Speaking of e-zines, do you write one of your own? If not, give that consideration. Mine is among the most powerful tools in my lead-generation toolbox. If you need help identifying a supplier, consider www.constantcontact.com and www.aweber.com. Both come highly recommended by e-zine publishers from coast to coast and around the world who reach audiences large and small.

These e-zine authors have become my colleagues and co-collaborators. In preparing this column, I asked The Publicity Hound Joan Stewart and media coach and marketing strategist Susan Harrow of PR Secrets to share their best tips to help business owners jump-start their 2007 publicity results. Here is what they had to say:

Joan Stewart:

Many businesses, from one-person shops to big corporations, should start blogging. The search engines love blogs, and blogs pull in traffic like a magnet and draw visitors to your Web site. If you don't know what blogs are or how to start one, do a search on Google and get as smart as you can as fast as you can, or your competitors will leave you in the dust.



**Nancy S.
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Media-Savvy-To-Go

Start building valuable relationships with media people, and identify at least one media contact at each media outlet where you want coverage. Ask, “How can I help you?” Listen. Then do what they say.

Don’t limit your publicity activities only to traditional media. Bloggers, podcasters and other “new media” are in a position to spread the word about you much more quickly than traditional media can, and to a wider audience.

Susan Harrow:

Your headline dictates whether a reporter will read your release. The press releases that make the media call are those that incorporate a strong story idea about a topic that includes, but is not directly about, your business.

One of my copywriters came up with this headline: While most kindergartners are picking their noses and feeding their broccoli to the dog, 6-year-old Jace Richards was publishing his first book.

Do you notice how specific that is? Most publicists and people doing their own PR make the mistake of creating a headline that’s big and broad. Wrong. Make it small and specific. The narrower your topic, the more arresting it will be.

If you are among the many who want to get on the “Oprah” TV show, visit online at www2.oprah.com/tows/intheworks/tows_works_main.jhtml to get a sneak peek at what “Oprah” producers are looking for. Tie your story, service, product or cause directly into what they need, and you’ve got a chance of getting on the show. Submit your 2,000-character (about 350-word) idea through the Web site. Producers are standing by. One client of mine got called back within an hour.

When you submit an idea to “Oprah,” never pitch yourself, your product, service or cause. Pitch a topic that will resonate with her audience. Map out who the guests will be, how you imagine the segment to unfold and what visuals you plan to use. The producers need to SEE your idea in order to understand if it’s right for them or not. Make sure to include your credentials — why you and only you would be the best guest for the topic you’re pitching.

As for my own best advice to you, here it is: Brainstorm your own “top 10” list of media outlets that would offer the most credible and far-reaching platform from which to highlight what is special about your expertise and your growing business. Pay attention to these media outlets throughout the year. Ask each for their editorial calendar and identify how your own story fits into their editorial plans. Then, get into action to suggest winning story ideas that will serve their audiences and bring attention to your own company’s winning ways.

One year from now, with your diligence and follow-up, you might find that you’ve earned quality media placements in many of your top-10 media outlets. Then, you’ll be convinced beyond measure that public relations really does pack a powerful punch to help you get known, build media buzz, earn credibility and generate a path of quality leads to your door. With these benefits well within reach, you’ll wonder why you didn’t begin your public relations effort sooner.

Nancy S. Juetten owns Nancy S. Juetten Marketing Inc. and is the author of the “Media-Savvy-to-Go” publicity tips booklets and workbook. Subscribe to her free “Media-Savvy-to-Go” e-zine by visiting online at www.mediasavvytogo.com. Get in touch with your media relations questions by sending e-mail to nancy@nsjmtg.com or by calling 425-641-5214.