



PR POINTERS



## Dispel Those Publicity Myths: Get Your Business the Attention It Deserves

[By Pam Lontos]

Every business needs a cost-effective way to keep its name, its products, or its services in front of its prospects and customers. For many business owners, publicity is the key to such recognition and awareness. When done correctly, publicity develops your name recognition, gives your business instant credibility, and ultimately leads to increased sales. And best of all, publicity is absolutely free.

Publicity can come from anywhere and in many different forms. It can be as simple as having a letter published in the editorial column of your local newspaper or as dynamic as having a front-page article with your company's name splashed across the headlines. Unfortunately, because of the many myths that shroud the whole concept of publicity, many business owners fail to seek it out.

Before you can get your business the publicity it deserves, you need to separate the PR facts from the media fictions. Below are the most common publicity myths and the truths behind them.

**Myth #1: I need to own a "big" business to get the media's attention.**

While it's true that big business names are common in magazine and trade journal articles, the fact is that big business makes up only a small percentage of the American economy. Most readers know the big business names, but they often can't identify with them or their challenges. That's why many magazines and trade journals are eager to hear the opinions and perspectives of owners of small and medium-sized businesses. So whether you're a solo entrepreneur, a franchise operator, or a family-business owner, find out what the reporters want and then enthusiastically give your slant on the topic.

**Myth #2: My business will be a household name from that one big hit.**

Getting mentioned in or interviewed by a major national publication with a circulation of more than 1 million readers is certainly impressive. But will such a stroke of luck make your business a household name? Not likely. To become a household name, you need to develop "top-of-mind awareness." What is top-of-mind awareness? It's when people think of you first to fulfill their product or service needs. It's when publications of all sizes quote you and publish your articles. It's when customers and prospects say, "I've seen your company everywhere." Most important, it's when people purchase your products or services because they know your company's name and they perceive you as the marketplace leader. The only way to get top-of-mind awareness (to become a household name) is through constant exposure in a variety of publications.

**Myth #3: I need to use big words to impress the interviewer.**

In most cases, the person interviewing you, as well as the publication's readers, are not as intimate with your industry as you are. Therefore, they need the information you give them to be understandable and at a layperson's comprehension level. The best approach is to avoid speaking with industry jargon or using techno-terms. Instead,

speak as if you are explaining something for the first time. The simpler you can make your information, the better your chances will be of being quoted as the expert source.

**Myth #4: I need a unique theory or insight.**

While you don't want to rehash old news, there's no need to rack your brain for a totally new theory or perspective. The best approach is to present your findings, opinions, or topic of expertise in a new light—one that may be close to someone else's but that catches the reporter or editor's interest. Perhaps you have information that can refute a recent claim or that shows how a current business challenge is affecting the publication's target readership. When you simply put a new spin on a current theory or insight that interests the publication's readers, reporters will want to present your findings.

**Myth #5: I can't get my business into *that* publication.**

It's common for small and medium-sized business owners to feel intimidated by the big-name publications. They envision high-powered magazine editors schmoozing with big-company CEOs and lining up interviews with well-known figureheads for the next six months. In reality, editors scramble daily to find people to interview who have knowledge on the latest trends and topics. Realize, too, that editors must find new and



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exciting people to interview either weekly or monthly, so the more knowledgeable people they can add to their database, the better. Make yourself stand out as a reliable information source, and you will get the media's attention.

### **Myth #6: Small publications don't matter.**

Small publications are just as important as the big ones. Why? Because you never know who reads them. You may think that a magazine with only a 10,000-15,000 circulation could never get your business the kind of publicity you want, but what if half of

those readers are your target customers? Even better, what if your interview or article in a small publication prompts an editor from a large publication to call you? Target small publications as well as the large ones. As long as your information is interesting and accurate, you will gain more attention and get the publicity you need.

Getting publicity is the best way to promote your business. And when you know the facts of the PR business, you can attain the publicity you need easily and then use it to your best advantage. With a constant stream of good publicity, your business is destined to grow.

### **About the Author**

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 vice president of Disney's Shamrock Broadcasting, she knows the ropes of getting you good publicity and how to use it to really boost your sales. Call for a free consultation at 407-299-6128.

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