



Digital-Age Public Relations

*The use of the Internet in Public Relations -
Becoming a Business Legend*

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DIGITAL-AGE PUBLIC RELATIONS

THE USE OF THE INTERNET IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

"For all businesses there exists the need to be raised up above your competitors in the eye of potential clients.

This can be difficult with the sheer size and volume of everyone's Internet voice raised at the same time.

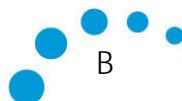
This report discusses the use of the Internet in public relations, not advertising. A small business cannot afford to really break through with advertising alone.

There is a better way: Legend-building through public relations. "

John Shenton - President - Global Millennia Marketing



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LEGEND BUILDING

LEGEND BUILDING

Public relations as a defined business tool got its start in the early 20th century, with help from “father of public relations” Edward L. Bernays, nephew of Sigmund Freud. Some derided it as hype, spin or flackery, but public relations became considered even more essential as consumers and investors got increasingly savvy and media-connected.

As important and pervasive as advertising is today, it is just part of the overall “marketing mix” that marketers employ. With the rise of all-day-everyday news connectivity, and especially the explosion of press covering business, public relations has become an increasingly important part of doing business over the past couple of decades.

This report discusses the use of the Internet in public relations, not advertising. Even though advertising works, it is expensive and has diminishing returns. In our information overload environment, a small business cannot afford to really break through with advertising alone.

There is a better way: Legend-building through public relations. Let the news media, customers, professional peers, and the community sing your praises. Use your advertising dollars for better purposes.

Are you interested in integrating the Internet as a tool to promote your small business? Why not become a business legend and have business to come to you?

Sound good? Sure it does. But the real question is how can you do it? How can you become a business legend? By working at it. You cannot buy it, and it does not happen overnight.



LEGEND-BUILDING TOOLS

First, be exceptional. Your first task is to hone your skills and integrity so that you are one of the best in your field. Give customers and the community more than they expect.

Once you deserve to be a legend, it does not just happen. You need to be proactive and learn the art and science of positive public relations. After all, good public relations is a process, not a flash-in-the-pan event or series of events. To put your business on the public relations (PR) map, you need a long-term public relations plan custom-crafted for your skills and business; and you need the skills to implement it.

LEGEND BUILDING

Next, start to implement your plan. Work smart rather than hard. Earn recognition as an expert in your field by scheduling speaking engagements that put you in front of your target market. Write interesting material for the right media (i.e., the stuff your customers read, such as e-mail newsletters, discussion lists, and e-zines), in which you emphasize your chosen public image and expertise.

Make news instead of noise. Your plan should suit your environment and goals by mixing a precisely targeted combination of visibility in professional organizations, excellence in local business, activities in civic organizations, and communications with and through the media.

If you make news, tell the media about it. But never bombard them with hype, non-newsworthy press releases, or demands for coverage. Reporters and editors see right through it. Learn to write good press releases and distribute them to the gatekeepers of the media that your potential customers see.

Once you have a workable PR plan, stick with it. Legend building requires both good publicity tools and persistence. Eventually, if your plan is a good one, the media and your professional peers will begin to recognize your achievements and sing your praises. That is when business magic begins to happen. Impressed with your reputation, people actually will ask to do business with you. And because you have substance behind the sizzle, many of them will become customers for life.

BUILDING CREDIBILITY

This is the era of small and home-based business. This also raises the question of whether small-business and/or home-based entrepreneurs face a unique set of public relations (PR) challenges.

Small businesses home-based or not, frequently have meagre resources. That means they are forced to rely on inexpensive and free PR tactics to attract customers. The problem is that these strategies require a lot of time-consuming research and a huge time commitment in order to be successful. Inexpensive does not have to mean amateurish, but it often appears that way if you have not done your PR homework. You risk being perceived as a gadfly rather than as a solid business if you do not plan your PR strategy.

CAPITALIZE ON YOUR STRENGTHS

Another issue is that small and/or home-based businesses usually face credibility problems because of their small size and relative obscurity. You, as a small-business owner, are off the public's radar screen while your larger, established competitors have a large advertising budget, a history, and impressive offices.

The best way around this inequality (besides a massive ad blitz) is a public relations campaign that emphasizes your community involvement, experience, and integrity. Join business and community organizations and look for opportunities to publicize your activity to earn an image as a solid member of the business community.



LEGEND BUILDING

Also, small businesses have a lot of public relations needs in common with their bigger counterparts. If you want business to come to you, your priority is to work consistently at becoming a business legend and appearing on potential customers' radar.

So how do you establish your self as a business legend? Earn it! You need a solid, relevant, memorable image; a good PR plan to implant that image in the minds of your target market; the right media list; and goals and strategies to make and publicize news. While you cannot afford much advertising, your PR efforts can play to your strength of local community ties.

Here are a few tips. First, take advantage of two great equalizers in the business world: your Web site and your PR. Your Web site and your press releases can either make you look solid or flaky. Press releases are what Web surfers and media writers see.

If your Web site is well-designed and effectively promoted, and if you send solidly written press releases about real news events to the right media outlets at the right time, you can look as impressive and solid as any larger enterprise in the world.

Just remember that you have as much or more of a presence on the local level as the local giant; look for ways to make a positive impact on the local community and then publicize them. *(See our reports on Internet Marketing)*

As a small business, your goal is to establish an image of businesslike solidity, not to use smoke and mirrors to misrepresent your size. Home-based business is more common and accepted than ever these days. Consequently, the best strategy is to treat size as a non-issue by ignoring it.

As for dealing with the credibility problems that come from being new or small, the best way to work through any business credibility problem is by inspiring customer confidence. Stress the benefits of doing business with your company in all your promotions; develop an impressive, credible guarantee; and then publicize it.

If people feel they will be well served as customers and will be protected by a money-back guarantee and/or a return policy, they will not have a problem with either newness or size. They want problems solved and look to the business that can best get the job done for them.



WHAT IS NEWS?

How can you be mentioned in the paper, on radio, or on television? Often the question originates from the frustration caused by an ignored press release or the mention of a competitor. The answer is: "Know what constitutes business news, and make sure you report it to the right media."

REPORT WHAT'S NEW

Newspapers look for stories aimed at business owners. For example, they write about new technology, products, and developments that might affect their business readers. They also try to write business stories that invite the general reader into their business papers.

PUT THE LOCAL CONNECTION UP FRONT

Know the publications you deal with. Go back to the tried and true technique of good PR: Know who you should target, send your story to them, and put the local connection right up front."

MAKE IT USEFUL, RELEVANT, AND INFORMATIVE

Newspapers want news information that is useful, relevant, and informative to their readers. Can area executives act on, profit from, learn from, or benefit from it? Will it help them run their companies? If so, it is business news."

DO NOT ADVERTISE

Do not try to sell advertising as news. Recognize that professional news organizations maintain a clear separation between advertising and news. News is covered by professional journalists who neither know nor care how many ad dollars you spend. They look for things that interest readers and inform the community.

Also, know that sometimes things that are not picked up by the news organization are not discarded. Journalists keep files and refer to them when a story comes up that might have a tie to you or your business. Be patient, and keep sending good stories.

If you can, get to know the local business journalists and become a reliable and factual source for business news. If you win their respect, they might seek you out when doing a story that could matter to you.

Finally, read or watch your news media targets and ask yourself what their readers and listeners might like to know.

CONSULT THIS LIST OF NEWS YOU CAN USE

Below is a list of the type of company news that might make good local business stories. While this list is far from exhaustive and is not guaranteed to result in coverage, these types of news releases just might get you mentioned in your local media.

Business expansions and firm growth plans

Jobs are news.

Consumer or market data

If you have a real scientific market or industry-attitude survey that you do not mind making public, the media might be interested.

Grand openings

This typically isn't front-page news, but grand openings often merit a mention and could prompt a later story.

Personnel changes

For example: "XYZ Corp. hired Fred Smith as vice president today," or "Bill Smith will retire Dec. 1 as CEO of XYZ Corp."

New product announcements

For example: "XYZ Corp. now offers red product in addition to blue ones."

Public appearances by a business leader

For example: "The XYZ Corp. production vice president spoke on new production trends at the Chamber of Commerce annual dinner."

National articles published by a local business leader

For example: "The International Colour Journal published an article on 'New Trends in Red & Blue Marketing,' by XYZ Corp. President Jim Smith."

Positions or offices assumed at another organization

For example: "Joe Kool of XYZ Corp. was named chairman of the board of the Ice Cream Foundation."



Web site launches or important Web site feature updates or additions

If you have a new Web site or a major update to an existing one, let the media know. Some might mention it.

Being first at something

For example: "XYZ Corp. is the first to bring new colours to the market."

Tying in what you do to a national or local trend or event

If you are a tire dealer, why not send a press release about how the latest tire recall affects your business and customers, and how you are handling it.

Landing a major new client

Inform a local business reporter when you land a new client. It could be mentioned in a "Business Briefs" section of your newspaper's weekly business tabloid.

If you supply news to the right people, at the right time, in the right way, and trust in their news judgment, you will be happy with your coverage in the long run.

DIGITAL-AGE PUBLIC RELATIONS

PLANNING MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

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A good public relations program is a terrific way to bring a flood of inquiries and customers to your small business, whether it is online or not. But if you want truly legendary results in your quest to become a business legend, you need an effective digital-age public relations plan.

The wrong approach to kicking off your business publicity is to just send a business news release (especially one lacking real news) far and wide, to publications ranging from “The Wall Street Journal” to your local shopping weekly. First, this is unlikely to get reporters calling and broadcast vans rolling, because there are millions of businesses and people competing for scarce ink and airtime.

Second, premature publicity may get you noticed by the media, but not in the way you had in mind. If your target media label you as irresponsible, you probably will not get a second chance to generate good press.

Attracting the right attention and inspiring the media to write about and/or publish pictures of you requires a plan that incorporates understanding your business, your market and the media.



In short, create your public relations plan before you distribute your first news release, because good PR is not intuitive or easy.

Map out whom you want to reach, what you want to tell the world about your business, who already speaks to your target market, and how you can speak to those communications gatekeepers effectively. Also, do not forget to contemplate possible PR pitfalls and how to handle them.

If you have time, knowledge, and an ability to ferret out objective answers about your business, you can surely plan your own PR, using these questions for starters. But to avoid the blind spots make sure you ask people in your business network (key suppliers, accountant, company lawyer, etc.) to assist.

Ask somebody who understands your business and will be straight with you, since only candid, thorough answers will get the job done. Once you have data, budget some time in the library or bookstore to research how to go from gathering input to making an actual PR plan.

If doing your own PR plan doesn't appeal to you, do not make the mistake of ignoring PR altogether or going about it haphazardly. You are dollars and hours ahead spending your time doing what you do best (and earning revenue in the process) and hiring a PR professional to work for you.

At the beginning you will need answers to the following 11 questions:

1. **Who are we?** (What is our company name, location, and contact information? Who are our people? What business are we in? For example, are railroads in the business of running trains or of providing transportation services? Think about it.)
2. **What is distinctive about us?** (What is our unique selling proposition that makes us stand out from our competition and all other businesses?) Do not have one? Better develop one if you want publicity.
3. **What have we done lately?** (What news have we made? What accomplishments have we achieved in the last year or two?)
4. **What are we planning to do that the public might care about?** Think carefully about this, and be consistent with your other answers.
5. **What are we really selling?** (Products? An image? Success? A better lifestyle? The ability to help our customers do their jobs better?)
6. **To whom do we want to sell?** (Who is our ideal customer? Who buys now? Whom would we like to sell to?)
7. **What are our potential customers like?** (Where do they live and work? From whom do they buy products like ours? What do they read and watch?)
8. **Who is already speaking to our target market?** (Competitors? Wannabe competitors? Which media?)
9. **How are we perceived?** (Image? Credibility? Quality of our products and public presentations?)
10. **Given our industry and circumstances, how can we best get the world to perceive us positively?** (Advertising? News releases? Media kits? Philanthropy and sponsorships? Doing newsworthy things?)
11. **Now that we have committed ourselves to becoming a business legend through seeking publicity for our business and products, what can go wrong?** What if the media say untrue things about us? What if our products are defective? What if we cannot deliver on time?

DIGITAL-AGE PUBLIC RELATIONS

PROMOTING YOUR EXPERTISE

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As you do business in a particular field, you acquire a great deal of specialized expertise.

Your real-world experiences make you a valuable source of information. Your customers already turn to you for expert advice about your products and services.

Why not capitalize on your expertise by establishing yourself as a background expert? The media has a voracious appetite for information. Reporters need to find people who can inform their readers and listeners.



By positioning yourself as an expert in your field, you will gain valuable exposure for your company. You do not have to be an experienced broadcaster or writer; an interviewer will ask specific questions that will be easy for you to answer.

But do not wait for reporters to come to you. By taking the following steps, you increase the likelihood journalists will turn to you for information.

Narrow your area of expertise. The smaller your target the better. If you are a former corporate chief financial officer who designs cost systems for manufacturing in the electronics industry, you will be better off presenting yourself as an expert on cost systems for manufacturing than as a general management accounting expert.

Develop an online press kit. Include your professional biography, written to emphasize your expertise. Add a company history, press releases, key contacts and a letter describing your willingness to act as a media contact. Keep photos and biographies of other key personnel to a minimum.

Start small. Identify media outlets in your region that could use your expertise for interviews or background information. Concentrate your initial efforts locally at first. You must build a track record as an expert before you attract national interest.

Target trade and industry-specific publications. In the information age, these are the media equivalent of a small town.

Make contact. Find out who the assignment or managing editors are for each organization you wish to reach. Write a letter to each individually, stressing their needs and how you can help them. If they want to see your credentials, refer them to your online press kit.

Be patient. Editors usually do not acknowledge expert solicitations, but they often keep them on file for future reference.

Follow the news. Concentrate on organizations that give in-depth background, and be prepared to take advantage of breaking news. If you hear or read a story you know something about, call the appropriate editor to remind the person that you offered to be a guest expert on the subject.

Be prepared. Jot down notes so you will be prepared to say something worthwhile and informative. Avoid hype, pitches or self-serving remarks. Stick to the subject and let the interviewer establish your credibility by describing what you do.

If you follow these steps, you will greatly increase the chances that journalists will contact you for your opinion. Even though you probably will not be paid for your expertise, the resulting credibility and publicity will be a valuable foundation for your business and will more than repay the time you spend in preparation.

DO IT YOURSELF

Well-written press releases aren't the only effective implements in the complete business public relations toolbox. There are many other tools that can help you reduce your PR tasks. One of the best is public speaking.

After all, major corporations send their CEO's and other top people to important trade convocations, industry seminars, and public events to spread the word about what they do. It is such a priority that if their top people are unavailable, they often hire a professional corporate ambassador to represent them.

It works for them and it can work for you, too. Even if yours is not a small business without a budget for hiring a famous speaker and you are not as famous as Bill Clinton or Bill Gates, you can afford to have an effective company ambassador speaking for you. In fact, you cannot afford not to have one. And who is this affordable, effective ambassador? Look in the mirror.



If you want to spread the word about what you do, arrange to speak to those who might become customers or who can be a source of referral. There are probably many local or regional civic and fraternal organizations, chambers of commerce, business networking clubs, trade groups (for profit or not) business meetings, seminars, local radio and TV talk-show hosts, and other groups in your market.

Most of them have, or are trying to attract, members of your target audience within their ranks. Many of them are looking for speakers. Why not volunteer to give a free talk?

Use Local Resources

You can find them by getting lists of organizations from local chambers of commerce, newspapers, or by checking with your local reference librarian. Also try the phone book. Search for local organizations on the Web. If all else fails, call the local business journalist with whom you have established a relationship and ask for a few organization names.

Once you have discovered a few likely groups. Now is the time to write or call their program chairmen or presidents and offer to speak, whether or not you are a member.

Market Your Knowledge

When they accept, your next task is to prepare a practical talk filled with tips on how listeners can improve their businesses or their lives. Anticipate their questions and answer them in your remarks.

A good business speaker should not advertise. Impart information instead. After all, people pay you for what you know and what you can do, so your audience should be glad to hear you talk about it. The trick is to share what you know since you are the expert.

When you give your talk, distribute to your listeners a professional-looking handout that summarizes your tips, and, if you think they will help, use visual aids such as charts, slides, or PowerPoint presentations. As you speak, be relaxed and friendly. Introduce yourself in a few words if you have not been introduced. ("I'm John Smith of XYZ Company and I'm here to talk to you about ...")

Avoid arrogance and aloofness. Above all, be yourself. Business speaking is not an activity for melodrama or pretence. Just speak to people as you would to friends and associates. If you need help on speaking like a pro, check out the local public library or take a public speaking class at the local community college or university.

Do not forget the PR

Once you know what you will speak about, send a press release to the local media announcing your talk (or ask the organization to do it), then send out another release immediately after your talk summarizing, in no more than one page, what you said.

Public speaking is an effective PR tool that you should not fear, even if you are not a professional speaker. Chances are you will do just fine if you are prepared because you are talking about a subject you enjoy. Your passion will show and your enthusiasm will be contagious. Ready. Aim. Talk.

The following outlines what will boost your press release's chances of getting noticed and printed.

Give Them What They Want

Almost every newspaper, whether a specialized business paper or the business section of a daily newspaper, has a column whose writer is charged with answering a simple question: What's happening with businesses in our town?

Typically, column writers want the news basics: Who is getting hired or promoted, which businesses are expanding, which divisions are being sold or acquired.



Help them out by sending them a short one- or two-paragraph press release that simply states the facts. For example, "Mary Smith was named CEO of the Amalgamated Graphic Division of Consolidated Logo Design Inc. Previously, Smith was the designer at Colour Shop. She has an MBA from McGill University."

Your press release should be under two pages, include contact information and tell the story without embellishment. If the press release involves an employee, include a photograph, even if the paper already has one on file.

Take Aim

Do not depend on a busy editor to get your press release to the appropriate writer. If you send your information to the wrong person, you take the chance it will sit in an inbox until it is too late.

Take a few minutes to search through the publication and determine where a press release like yours should appear. Then find out who writes the column and send your news directly to the writer.

Ask yourself the editor's question: Who are my readers and why would they want to know this information? The answer will help you not only formulate the language of your press release but pick the appropriate publication and reporter.

Use common sense. If you send an item to the local small business editor that is more likely to intrigue executives of large companies, the editor will not take the bait. Similarly, if you send a national story to a local editor or a technology story to an international affairs reporter, your piece will not make it into print.

Old News Is No News

Newspaper editors like to be original. They do not like to duplicate what their competitors have done. While it is acceptable to send the same press release to several daily newspapers at once, editors of publications appearing weekly or monthly do not like to print stories that have already appeared in competing daily publications.

If your news schedule permits, find out the deadlines for weekly and monthly publications and send your news to them far enough in advance to give them an opportunity at the story before or at least at the same time others will have it.

If that is not possible, do not send a duplicate. Repackage the story with new facts or an original angle that differs from what you sent the dailies.

If you follow these simple rules and look at your story through the editor's eyes, your PR efforts will produce more press.

WRITE AN ARTICLE

Do you want a tool to promote your business that is cost-effective, uniquely yours and, best of all, that works?

How about one that earns you national recognition as an expert in your field, one that no amount of advertising can buy?

Believe it or not, there is such a business tool.

Writing an article and submitting it for publication to a trade magazine, a newspaper or a general interest magazine will do all those things and more.

Fortunately you do not need to be a professional writer to succeed as an author of business articles. As long as you know your subject and have something useful and interesting to say about it, chances are good that an editor will like what you have written.

Remember that editors not only need to inform readers; they need to satisfy the news demands of every issue.

Here are a few suggestions on how to become a successful business author on the Internet.

Make the article as professional as possible.

Keep in mind that you are likely competing with other authors and articles for space on an online publication. As a general rule, the better the site or newsletter, the more contributions it will have. And that means only the best will be chosen. If there's an article that does not need much editing next to one that does, which article do you think the editor is going to choose?

Do not write a long ad for your business. The best articles are largely unbiased and discuss an area with which the author is familiar, not just their product or service.

Stay away from gimmicks that belong in advertising copy.

Forget the ALL CAPITAL LETTERS and exclamation points!!! Exclamation points should almost never be used. You are not trying to hawk something in a radio ad, you are writing an intelligent article that will benefit your readers, so why are you yelling at them? Every industry has trade publications that feature informative articles not unlike yours, and you do not see capital letters and exclamation points in such magazines. The same rules apply online.

Do not write like you talk.

A casual style is OK, because you do not want to make your article impossible for readers to understand. If they need a dictionary handy to understand it, they will not complete the article. Yet again, numerous speech contractions and slang will not necessarily win you favour.

Request style and submission guidelines.

This serves two purposes:

- 1) It makes for "cleaner" copy (fewer errors or style issues, which means less work for the editor and a higher likelihood of getting on their good side)
- 2) It demonstrates that you are taking an interest in making your article appropriate for that specific site, as opposed to writing a general article and sending it out to 1,000 sites. Remember, if you ask for style and submission guidelines follow them. Some of the basic style issues that will come up in most articles submitted to Internet publications include capitalization and hyphenation (Internet or internet, online or on-line, email or e-mail, etc.)

Follow basic grammar rules.

You would be surprised how often articles can be submitted with Words that just Start with Capital letters in the Middle of sentences. It is probably been awhile since most people took a grammar class,

but capital letters are still reserved for the start of sentences and for proper nouns ("Internet," by the way, is a proper noun).

In addition to capitalization, the most common grammatical errors involve possessives and contractions (especially the possessive "its" and the contraction "it is"). There is always confusion surrounding "there", "their" and "they're".

Keep your writing brief.

The whole idea of the Internet is to disseminate information quickly. There's little point in having readers find an article that is several pages long or requires the reader to scroll down forever. Some publications like to use bulleted or numbered lists, which make information easy to digest. Keep your paragraphs short.

Be an editor yourself.

Use your spellchecker, and have someone else read your article before you send it. If there's no one available, put the article aside and return to it the next day with a fresh set of eyes.

Target a periodical.

What does your target market read? Who are the people you want to reach? In most cases, you are writing for the publicity rather than the money, so you need to make that publicity splash in the right arena. If a periodical you are reading contains ads that interest you, it probably has the right demographics for your market. If you are not sure, ask your customers and potential customers what they read.

Write on a subject you know.

That way, you will know what you are talking about and will not encounter a steep learning curve when you research your article.

Read the masthead of the selected publication.

Gather specific information about the editor who decides what to publish. This is usually the executive or managing editor or, at a large publication, the editor of a specific department.

Read the publication.

Read the publications, you want your article to appear in and note the subject, size and style of articles they publish. If you give editors what they want, you will increase your chance of getting published. Check the publication and its Web site for author guidelines and submission information. If you cannot find them, write to the editor and ask for them.

Write an outline your article.

Or, if it is 750 words or fewer, just write it. Be straightforward and let your expertise guide you. If you are not confident about your writing, have a friend or a colleague who will be honest edit it for you.

Do not try to be literary or fancy. How-to articles or discussions of new developments in the field are often what interests a business audience. As long as your style is clear and straightforward and you observe rules of grammar and syntax, you will be on the right track.

Include clear photos if appropriate and if you have rights to them.

Submit a query package.

This should includes the following: A letter explaining why the article is right for the magazine or the newspaper; the article or the outline itself; an author's biography; and, if you have them, clips of published articles. If you send the query by mail, include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Article submission.

Submit your article to one magazine at a time. In most publishing venues, it is unethical to send multiple submissions. You can submit variations on the article to other periodicals.

If you receive a rejection.

Take the editor's suggestions into account, revise if appropriate, and send your query package to the next publication on your list. Do not be discouraged. Somebody will publish you, especially if you have taken care to write the article well and listen to feedback provided by friendly editors.

Once your article is published, tell the world about it.

Send a press release and reprints, with permission to your clients, news media and industry publications. And be sure to keep a supply of copies on hand to send out as clips.

PR TIPS

Do you think that because you have launched your e-commerce Web site and diligently registered it with search site that orders will automatically flood in? Think again, please. Web site success takes some PR effort. Here are some tips to get you started.

Create a Dynamic Web Community

Start by creating a dynamic Web community for employees and customers. Far better than a static billboard, it can build visitor loyalty and translate into orders. Good ways to do this include offering a free, helpful opt-in e-mail newsletter, an FAQ (frequently asked questions) page (with answers and e-mail links for further information), and an on-site chat group.

It is also good to provide separate e-mail boxes for each department and to implement an auto-reply system that provides inquirers with instant replies. And be sure everybody answers all e-mail promptly and thoroughly! Together, these can create as much of a sense of community as a comfortable bookshop with push chairs and good coffee. It can feel like a real neighbourhood, foster interaction among enthusiastic boosters, and turn shoppers into buyers.

Publicize Your Site in the Offline World

Next, publicize your site offline relentlessly. Start by putting your URL and e-mail address on all business communications, including stationery, business cards, brochures, flyers, trade show booths, direct mail, billboards, vehicles, and advertisements.

Keep your URL in front of your target market by sending postcards to your mailing list that invite people to visit your site and that tout its customer-friendly features. Pass out the postcards in your place of business and wherever you speak or network.

Another useful trick is to run a small display ad in trade and local newspapers. The ad should contain only your URL and a catchy phrase such as: "Want to know how to profit from your logo design? Surf over to www.logodesigns.com"

Write Press Releases and Articles

Do not forget to send press releases announcing your site and briefly describing its contents to local and regional media, relevant trade and business publications, and national media where appropriate. Keep them short and double-spaced, avoid hype, and include a quote from you or a Web-knowledgeable employee on your site's features or user benefits.

Next, write an article for an appropriate magazine or trade journal on how your company decided to do business on the Web, or something similar. If you write well and avoid hype, they just might use it.

Sponsor an Event

Another good promotional trick is to have your Web site (not your company) sponsor a worthwhile, significant local contest, promotion, or philanthropic activity. It helps the community and generates positive press. Promote it vigorously.

Still Need More Ideas?

Got mail? If you have already sent postcards announcing your site to customers and potential customers, send out another set of Web cards announcing any changes and additions to your Web site. Similarly, why not offer coupons and/or hold an on-line sale like the major airlines do with their unsold seats, and send postcards to your prospects to announce it?

Got vehicles? They can promote too. Put a magnetic sign with your company's URL on all of your company and personal vehicles. License plate frames, too, are excellent promotional real estate, because people often look at them when they are stalled in traffic.

Got a brick-and-mortar storefront? Put your URL in large letters on the front windows and/or other prominent places, if practical. It is an easy way to promote your business around the clock, to customers and passers-by alike.

Why not think like a political campaign manager? Because campaign managers have the tough task of making a candidate visible and desirable in a short time, they resort to flashy things such as bumper stickers, yard signs, billboards, car signs, and direct mail. They even use human billboards, for example, people standing on busy street corners and holding roadside signs.

It is a real attention getter! It can work for Web site promotion too. Your local advertising specialties vendor can help you select appropriate items.

While you are at it, do not forget to let the local media know when you plan something unique and picturesque such as a human billboard campaign.

While these ideas barely scratch the promotional surface, they should help get you started on building an electronic legend for your business and inducing customers to come to you. Simply remember that your goal should be to reach your customers, induce them to come to your site, and get them to buy your products.

DIGITAL-AGE PUBLIC RELATIONS

FOLLOW-UP SUCCESS

FOLLOW-UP SUCCESS!

Your public relations (PR) efforts finally paid off! You and your business were just featured in the newspaper, in a magazine article, or on radio or television. Seeing your face or company on television or in print feels great and is far more valuable publicity than an equal amount of advertising space.

By all means celebrate your PR success. But you still have work to do. Because if your story only ran once, it is unlikely that it made an impact with enough members of your target market. If you want something out of this publicity opportunity that you can take to the bank, you have to leverage it. Here are a few tips to help you.



Send Follow-Up Press Releases

First, recognize that there was a reason the news medium picked up your story it was not a fluke. Obviously, at least one professional journalist thought what you are doing is news.

It would not hurt to send follow-up press releases to the journalist who wrote about you and to send similar press releases to other media in the same market about whatever sparked the story in the first place. If you include the published article (or tape of the story) as a clipping to show that you are newsworthy, you do not have to say it.

Implement a Direct Mail Campaign

Increase the exposure of the story by mailing copies directly to members of your target market. But first you must contact the TV station, newspaper or periodical that ran your story to get permission to reproduce the on-air interview or print article, with due credit, of course.

Cut and paste the clipping in a way that gives the source full credit while allowing you to bask in their prestige. Put the source's masthead in the headline for your article and place a copy of the article below the masthead so that everything fits on one page, even if you have

FOLLOW-UP SUCCESS

to use legal-sized paper. If your publicity was broadcast, make a tape and put the station's logo on the cover of the cassette.

Be sure to include the phrase "Used by permission of XYZ News" on your article clipping or tape. Then write a simple and straightforward cover letter: "We were recently featured on XYZ News, and we thought you would like to see the article (or interview), etc. It sums up our philosophy of doing business and gives some tips on how you can do more business."

Once you have your package (cover letter and reproduced article or tape), mail it to those you want to reach your prospects and customers. If they have already seen it, no harm is done, because it will merely reinforce their image of you as newsworthy. If they haven't seen it, your mailing remedies that nicely.

Feature the Story in Promotional Materials

Post or link to the article on your company Web site so those who visit you in cyberspace will see it too. If you have an audio or video copy of the story, make it available on your Web site for download or as streaming media file.

Feature the story in your company brochure and press kit as well. Spectacular publicity deserves a place in your company literature. If the article is really good, it is too valuable to be treated as a one-time shot. So, whether you hit the cover of a national business magazine or appear on Page 17 of your local paper, make the most of it by bringing it to the attention of your target market. You have little to lose but your anonymity.

FOLLOW-UP TIPS

Suppose you send an important news release to a media list and get no response.

Do you just chalk it up to bad luck or should you follow up to increase the chances of the media picking up your news? It is probably not a good rule to follow up if you sent your release to a large list or if you used a wire service to distribute it.



Generally, it is safe to assume that the journalists in question have gotten your release, read it and will contact you if they're interested. Try not to add to the volume of inquiries they receive without good reason.

If you are not contacted after sending a news release, it means the media outlets on your list are running a story based on the information you sent or they didn't find it newsworthy.

FOLLOW-UP SUCCESS

Remember that journalists receive a large number of releases and rightfully get annoyed by those who pester them. Trust their judgment and respect their requirements for what constitutes news.

That being said, some special circumstances exist in which a follow-up might make sense. If you know the journalist well or if you are pretty sure your story is an important and time-sensitive one that fits the editorial calendar of the specific publication, a properly formulated follow-up is appropriate.

Here are a few effective tips:

First, never make more than one follow-up inquiry, no matter how important you might think your news.

Always include the original news release in your follow-up if it is by e-mail or fax. Attach a note to make it clear you are following up.

Respect the journalist's time. Make your follow-up note brief and to the point.

Do not ask for a response to your follow-up. Including proper contact information in the release is all that is needed.

The telephone is often a good instrument for follow-up. Do not hesitate to leave a detailed but short message. Since you are not resending the release in a phone call, do not forget contact information.

If your follow-up contains new news or even a fresh spin on the old news, its chances of being picked up are enhanced. If you include a follow-up with some additional information, make sure to note it and to include the original news release as well.

Do not send news to more than one journalist in the same medium without letting each journalist know.

If you use these simple tips and do not abuse the process by sending too many follow-ups, you can increase the likelihood that your news will be picked up.

DIGITAL-AGE PUBLIC RELATIONS

PR MAKEOVER

PR MAKEOVER

Almost every company needs a PR makeover at some time to get the spark back into its PR efforts. While not all companies need ongoing services from a public relations firm, all can profit from a cost-effective and instructive PR makeover, especially one that concentrates on the PR realities of the digital marketplace.

Even if your company does its own PR or has a retainer with a PR firm, it is still a good idea to have a PR makeover for the same reason it is a good idea to get a second opinion when your doctor gives you an unpleasant diagnosis.

WHAT DO WE DO?

So what is involved in a PR makeover?



First, a detailed plan that evaluates a company's image, evaluates what has been done, and includes specific recommendations on how to project the right image to the right people.

Second, tools for success. These include a targeted, custom-designed media list; some lessons on creating and using news releases, including several releases sent to the media list so the client can see how it is done and measure results; and ongoing coaching.

Third, if your company is Internet-based or going online, an online media kit and a Web site critique and usability analysis should be added. The package might include Web site marketing recommendations and

perhaps a Web site content rewrite.

A good PR makeover gives you the tools and the encouragement to continue to generate public relations after the makeover expert moves on. Though it is a short-term process, not an ongoing contract, it should include the option for you to receive coaching as needed.

Makeover Material?

This handy checklist can help you determine whether your company is a good candidate for such a makeover. Read each statement carefully and decide whether it applies to your company.

- Your company has never developed a detailed PR plan, either on its own or with a PR firm.
- You have a PR plan, but it has not been through an annual check-up and re-evaluation in more than a year.
- Your company has not sent out a news release within the past three months.
- You do not have a media list updated within the past six months that includes titles and addresses, and specifies how those on the list want to receive their news.
- You do not have a specific PR plan for your company's online presence.
- Your competitors receive more news coverage than you do.
- You do not have an online media kit.
- Your marketing and advertising plan does not include a detailed section on public relations.
- Your customers do not agree about what your company stands for.
- You have not written an article for the trade press in your industry.

If you agree that at least three of these statements apply to your company, you probably should think about a PR makeover sooner rather than later. If more than five of them apply to you, you need to start today.

DIGITAL-AGE PUBLIC RELATIONS

MEDIA RELATIONS

MEDIA RELATIONS

It is a basic public relations axiom that good media relations pay off in good publicity. First, keep in mind that the media, print, broadcast, or electronic are not machines. They are businesses staffed by real people, just like your business and every other business in the world. This means that solid media relations are driven more by good relations between people than by any other factor.

These four R's of good media relations apply no matter how big or small your business might be or what it sells. They apply equally to vice presidents of public relations in multinational corporations, owners of small businesses, and sole proprietors of home-based business.

1) Read

The first R is read—or, in the case of broadcast medium, you could say regard. You must read or watch the media in which you want your business to appear. It is your target. You cannot expect to be a good news contributor or subject in the long haul if you have no idea who is receiving your news releases or what it is they want to feed their voracious news beast.

Try to get a general overview of the flavour and style of the medium by reading and/or watching it carefully through time. Your goal should be to figure out what the news choices and needs of the medium are, what a typical news story looks like for it, and who its readers and viewers are.

2) Research

Once you accomplish the first R, it is time to explore your target medium in a bit more depth. Thus, the second R is research. Based upon your overview, your goal should be to add depth to your understanding.

Find out who covers what for the medium. A good place to start is the masthead or the broadcast credits, their telephone and fax numbers, and their e-mail and snail mail addresses.

Then try to put yourself in their place to discern the specific needs of your various target media. Broadcast and print journalists look for different things. More often than not, the former want a photogenic story and the latter want an in-depth interview.

Do not forget e-media. Make an effort to research their special interests, especially because even traditional media have Web sites these days. E-journalists might not be the same people as print or broadcast journalists, even though they might work for the same company.

3) Relating

The third R of good media relations is relating. Now that you know something about the media and the people who work there, get to know them. Take a journalist for lunch; ask them what you want to know, for example, how they like their news delivered, by fax, snail mail, or e-mail? What format they like to receive it in, usually a standard press release but not always. When are their deadlines? What stories they are considering for the near future? Most are candid and will be happy to share this information.

Once you obtain answers, write them down and make a file on each journalist so you can respect their wishes and needs. And do not forget to keep in occasional contact, without being a nuisance. Be friendly but not obsequious when you run into them.

4) Referring

The fourth R is referring. Relationships should be reciprocal and benefit both parties as much as possible. Journalists need people who can function as their eyes and ears so they can keep track of what is going on and get a sense of what the important stories are.

If you have some news, know somebody who has insights into a trend, or just have thought of a good story idea, pass it along to the right individual in your group of friendly journalists. A simple note or email message is usually a good way to do this but, depending on your relationship, a telephone call might help. Do not be self-serving, do not expect anything in return, and do not think the journalist has to do what you say. On the other hand, do not think he or she will not appreciate your help.

If you are credible, consistent, and honest, and disclose any interest you might have in the story upfront, chances are your media relations will be excellent, and you will be well on your way toward making yourself a local, regional, or industry-specific business legend.

MARKETING ON THE INTERNET

ABOUT GLOBAL MILLENNIA MARKETING

ABOUT GLOBAL MILLENNIA MARKETING

Global Millennia Marketing Inc. is one of the first of a new breed of integrated Internet marketing communications companies and is comprised of four on-line divisions. Our ability to work closely at all levels optimizes synergy between the different divisions from the strategic planning stage right through to tactical execution of all our projects.



John Shenton B. Eng., President of Global Millennia Marketing, is a dynamic, adaptable and results driven Senior Executive with many years experience in building and operating companies in N. America & Europe, creating market presence and increasing sales throughout domestic and International markets worldwide.

His strong technical and analytical background is supported by comprehensive sales, marketing, operational, and general management skills in the computer, Internet and telecommunication industry.

He has a great deal of International experience, having lived and worked within the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland and Canada.

service on a global basis in English, French, Chinese and Arabic to a diverse range of companies from start-up to established corporations.

As the use of New Digital Media such as the Internet, CD-ROM's, DVD's, increases, the importance of coordinating its use with traditional printed media becomes paramount. We are uniquely placed to address this need, having evolved from genuine specialists in both fields. We work with our clients to develop effective, long-term partnerships, which encompass every facet of the management and marketing functions, from initial project consulting through creative design and production, to corporate presentation management.

Our teams have many years' industrial experience in the fields of Sales & Marketing, Finance and Information Technology in North America, Europe and Asia. This background allows us to quickly empathize with our clients to understand their markets, their objectives and to identify their business needs. Through strategic planning and the creative application of our skills and experience, we deliver effective total marketing communications solutions, which meet, and typically exceed, their pre-defined goals and expectations.

Operations are controlled from Montreal, Canada. From here we are able to provide



Integrated Internet Marketing & Web Site Design



Graphics, Identities, Illustrations and Branding



A leading Internet Solution Provider



Consulting, Promotion and Planning