

Working the Media

How do get you the media to come you?

How do you get them to recognize you as a news source – someone they can call when they need your expertise on their story?

You want to appear as the authority in your field and a good source of continuing news content for them. For example, if you're teaching fitness online and there's a new study that says doing naked jumping jacks burns twice as many calories as doing them with your clothes on, you want the media to contact you for a quote or to answer a few questions.

And wouldn't it be nice if each time you launch a new fitness course, you could get interviews in newspapers, in magazines, on the radio and even on television? Like a snowball rolling downhill - gathering speed and quickly growing in size - once you do get interviews you can leverage those into more credibility with your current and future customers. The more publicity you get, the more you will get. As you become recognized as an authority, members of the media will become more willing to run your press releases and do your stories.

Make no mistake, print media is still very influential. These days we tend to talk about social media, social influence and so forth online. But we sometimes lose sight of the fact that there is a real world out there with print media – newspapers and magazines, as well as radio and television. And appearing in any of these media gives you instant credibility you simply cannot get through social media.

One thing that's especially important to understand is why being in the news is so vastly superior to advertising. When you purchase ads, it's assumed you can say pretty much what you like as long as you don't violate any laws. Is it any wonder people are immediately skeptical of advertising claims?

But when you're in the news it's an entirely different matter. Journalism is for the most part fact based – or at the very least, people believe it's fact based. Viewers and readers assume what they hear in the story is true, that it's been verified, and that there is no ulterior motive for the story (such as parting them from their money.)

In a nutshell, advertising raises defenses and news lowers defenses. As an aside, next time you write an ad, whether it's a sales page, an email, etc., try framing it in the style of news and see if your conversion rate doesn't increase.

Fortunes have been made with just this tip. Think about it.

Brian Wilkes, an ex-anchorman and journalist, was having dinner with Walter Cronkite. Cronkite turns to Wilkes and says, "You have to be able to look people right in the eye and tell them things they don't want to hear. The secret in this business of broadcast news is credibility." He paused. "If you can fake *that*, you've got it made."

Most trusted man in America? Hardly. Google it sometime and you'll find the bogus survey CBS quoted when bestowing that title on their evening news anchor. But Cronkite was intelligent and good at his job. As he explained, the secret was not in convincing people of what he believed, but in finding out where they stood, determining the exact center of the ever-shifting ground of public opinion, and then standing there and owning that space as if he had been there all along.

This is juicy stuff, especially for a marketer. If Cronkite were in our shoes, he'd tell us to find out where our customers' heads are, and then build our products and our messages based upon that. This way you never need to convince – your prospect has already sold himself before you've even offered him your product.

In The War of the Worlds, actors portrayed journalists, 'reporting' of the invasion of Martians in New Jersey. As implausible as that story was, there were still people who believed it was actually happening. Why? Because it sounded like breaking news, not a radio play.

In the 1950's the Federal Communications Commission in the U.S. created new regulations to limit and govern the commercial content of television. The worry was that the lines between paid advertising and news were becoming blurred and consumers were being fooled. But then in 1984 the American President Reagan eliminated those regulations. Result? The infomercial. Now you had extra long commercials that were staged like talk shows, news shows, etc. with the sole purpose of selling products. And it worked better than anyone even dared hope. According to tapebeat.com, over \$150 billion of consumer products in the US are sold through infomercials each year.

What's my point? Get you, your products and your website into the media spotlight. Or at the very least, make your advertising look and feel more like news than just another sales pitch.

There are two basic methods to getting into the news. The first is to be the subject of a news story. Examples might be that you've got an especially

provocative, titillating or controversial product worthy of being news, or your business is holding an event to raise money for a worthy cause. This gets you into the media eye for short bursts of time, but each time you want to get back into the media, you need to come up with another brilliant, newsworthy idea.

The second method is to become an authority in your field – someone the media turns to for quotes, to answer questions, to explain information to their audience and so forth. This gets you into the news on a more frequent basis, although with less splash.

Both methods are good, and together they can create more free advertising than you could hope to buy in a lifetime.

If you're thinking that you or your business could never be featured in news stories, you're probably right. The very first thing you've got to do is get your head around the fact that **you or your business can indeed be newsworthy**. If Wayne Gretsky missed 100% of the shots he didn't take, then you're going to miss 100% of the media opportunities you allow to slip by because you're not confident you have what it takes to be news.

There isn't time or space here to give you the full run

down on getting into the media – entire books are written on this topic alone. For example, *Free Publicity: A TV Reporter Shares the Secrets for Getting Covered on the News* by Jeff Crilley is in my opinion an especially good one.

What I can tell you is this: KNOW for a fact that you can get into the news, because you can.

Be ever vigilante for news opportunities, and when you see one, don't hesitate to jump on it immediately.

Do submit stories to your local newspapers, television shows, local websites, etc. This is well within almost anyone's comfort range and it's a great place to start.

Work towards becoming a featured columnist or editorialist in your local publications. Getting your smiling face and great advice in front of local readers on a weekly basis will get you business. Start by writing letters to the editor that do not sound like commercials. In our fitness expert example, you might note that you're seeing more overweight children in the neighborhood, and offer 3 tips their parents can use to motivate their children into activity.

If you can retain ownership of your columns, do so, even

if it means allowing the paper or magazine to run them for free. This way you can send those columns to other publications as well.

Let your local reporters know that you are an authority in your subject they can call on when they need help with a story. When they call, drop everything and be as helpful as possible. Do not appear self-serving – put their need to get the story accurate and finished ahead of your desire for publicity. 9 times out of 10 they will cite you as a source. “According to local expert John Smith, ...”

More Tips For Getting Into The News:

- ✦ When pitching your own stories, keep in mind the question every reporter and news editor is silently asking: “Will my audience care about this story? If so, why?” Get familiar with the kinds of stories your target news outlets publish, and tailor your own press releases accordingly.
- ✦ Anticipate trends in your field of expertise and the larger implications of those trends. In other words, be on the forefront of news whenever possible instead of chasing it. Show how this new trend will affect the readers of the publication.

- ⤴ Be the odd man out. If a story breaks and everyone in the media is in lockstep on what this story means, take the opposite view. If a reporter is looking for something different or even just to balance out their own story, they will be anxious to talk to you. Note: Be sure you can back up your point view with facts or examples.
- ⤴ Know what a reporter has written before approaching them. Tell them you enjoyed their article on propagating ferns when you pitch them an idea to write about the exotic plants you're selling by mail. A little honest flattery and attention goes a long way to getting your own free publicity.
- ⤴ Forget small talk. Are you calling a reporter to pitch your story? Or is she calling you to get your perspective? Get to the point. The reporter will appreciate that you respect they're under a deadline.
- ⤴ Do the reporter's work for them. When you send out a press release, make it read like a story in the newspaper. You'll be surprised how many times they will print it just as you wrote it.
- ⤴ Relax. Sometimes your stories will be picked up, other times they won't. It may take time to get

recognized as an expert reporters can call on – simply continue to get your name out there. Have fun with this. You may find it slow going at first, but persistence pays off. And the more publicity you get, the more you will get because publicity begets publicity. Something you do today such as sending out a press release or making contact with a reporter may not pay off for days, weeks or even months. But as long as you are offering newsworthy stories and/or expert help in your niche, continuous effort nearly always gets rewarded.

Bonus: How To Get Reporters To Use Your URL In Their Stories

When you get an interview, don't ask the reporter to print your website address in their article – you'll just annoy them. They're already giving you free publicity, and if you start pushing then they will do what comes naturally and push back.

Instead, give them a good reason to include your URL in their story. Here are 5 different ways...

1. Identify your company by your URL. Instead of saying your company is My Really Cool Company, call it MyReallyCoolCompany.com.

2. Offer free information at your website. For example, if you're a plumber then it could be a free report on "How Not to Get Ripped Off When You Hire a Plumber." If you're teaching people to make money from home, it could be "10 Businesses You Can Start For Under \$300 and Run From Home."
3. Offer a free service at your website.
4. Offer free software, free cheat sheets, a free quiz to determine if they have "x" problem, etc.
5. Hook them in the interview, reel them in on the website. Give the reporter several tips on how to solve a problem, and then tell him that his audience can find 17 more tips at your website.

Your goal is to make the reporter WANT to share your URL, rather than begging her to share it. This can make a difference in whether or not your URL makes it into the article as well as the effort the reporter makes in sending readers there. And when you provide the right incentive you'll also find that far more of the audience members find their way to your website.

