



## **Businesses Seek More Publicity**

By JOYCE M. ROSENBERG

AP Business Writer

24 October 2002

Copyright 2002 The Associated Press. All Rights Reserved.

NEW YORK (AP) - In a difficult economy, when many small businesses cut back on advertising budgets, they look to publicity as a way to get their products and services into the media.

It can be a wonderful alternative - one that's cheaper than an ad campaign and that can reach the right audience for a particular firm.

But it can be more difficult than advertising - with an ad, all you have to do is pay for it, and your company's name is out there. With publicity, you have to persuade someone - such as a newspaper reporter or a radio or TV producer - that your product or service is worth their print space or air time.

Before approaching the media, you need to ask yourself, "are you doing something new, and that somebody other than you is going to care about," said Lloyd Trufelman, president of **Trylon Communications Inc.**, a New York-based public relations firm.

If you're not sure, then you probably should consult a public relations professional. "They can give you an honest appraisal of what they can do for you before you hire them," Trufelman said.

He also warned, "Anyone who absolutely guarantees you coverage, run away from."

Trying to get publicity for your company is going to be time-consuming. So you'll need to decide whether it's worth it to do your own public relations, or whether it makes more sense to hire someone else to do it.

Hiring someone could mean a full-time employee, if your company's needs justify the expense. A big plus with an in-house publicist is "that person is thoroughly stitched into your company and is totally dedicated to you 24/7," Trufelman said.

If you opt for a publicity firm, Trufelman suggests bypassing the big agencies in favor of one of the smaller outfits, one that can give you more time and attention. You also might want to find a PR firm that specializes in your industry.

He also recommends that you be sure the company you hire won't give you all kinds of extras that you don't need and don't want to pay for. Remember, it's some publicity and not a broad advertising campaign that you're after.

PR executive Rick Frishman says many small businesses should be able to do publicity on their own, provided they learn how to work with the media - basically, how to present their company's story to a publication or broadcast outlet in a way that will grab someone's

attention.

If you need to learn more about publicity, there are plenty of resources. Many colleges and universities - including those that have Small Business Development Centers - run seminars about publicity. You can find a list of SBDCs, which are sponsored by the U.S. Small Business Administration, on the Internet at [www.sba.gov/sbdc](http://www.sba.gov/sbdc).

Another option is SCORE, the organization of retired executives who are willing to advise small business owners on a variety of topics. You can give more information at [www.score.org](http://www.score.org).

If you're going to do it yourself, "your job is to make yourself different, better than anyone else," said Frishman, president of Planned Television Arts, a division of the public relations firm Ruder-Finn in New York.

You also need to remember that the people you're seeking publicity from are going to be primarily concerned with delivering interesting, newsy stories to their readers and viewers, not helping you sell your company's product or service.

"They want to increase their readers or ratings. Unless you understand that, you're not giving them what they want" and you won't get the publicity you want, said Frishman, co-author of the book "Guerrilla Publicity."

One of the most important aspects of getting publicity is finding the right audience. Maybe your story won't make it in The Wall Street Journal, or even your local paper - and if that's the case, don't waste time and money by approaching them. But it might be perfect for a trade magazine or newspaper.

If you don't know where to find news organizations, or who to contact at a particular outlet, go to the library and look at the yearbooks for two magazines, Broadcasting & Cable and Editor & Publisher. You'll find plenty of names and addresses; narrow your contact list to the people most likely to be interested in your story.

When you start making calls, keep in mind that there's an art to contacting the media - one that's not too different from dealing with customers. You'll want to ask if this is a good time to be calling, and you'll want to listen carefully to the response you get; it will give you valuable information about how to proceed with the next call.

And, like it or not, you'll need to take "no" for an answer.