

101 WAYS TO EFFECTIVELY USE PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR)

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General PR Advice

1. **Develop a marketing network with complimentary businesses.** Working with other vendors and linking to each other's websites is a very useful way to get your name out there. You provide a link on your website - which directs your web visitors to another website - while the sites you have partnered with do the same for you. This will increase your traffic as well as give you a chance to network with people who have similar interests. And, having relevant links on your website to related companies, and links from their site to yours, gives you a higher importance in the eyes of the search engines.
2. **Recycle your publicity.** Whenever you get a mention in the media, get some extra mileage out of it by recycling it in your advertising. You can use it on your website, as part of your email signature, in your forum signature or even as a jumping off point to get additional media exposure. For example, you could send a copy to a reporter at a different media outlet with notes on how you could offer them a different angle. All of these things will make you look more legitimate and trustworthy to potential customers.
3. **Be present in the lives of your customers and potential customers.** Remember, public relations is all about having a "relationship with the public". In other words, your customers! So make it a part of your PR plan to do something great for your customers that will make your business stand out from the competition. Send holiday greetings or ask clients to write down their birth dates so you can send them a card. You could even send them a free gift on their special day or give them a discount. There are plenty of ways to make your customer feel as if you are genuinely interested in maintaining the relationship you have built with them.
4. **Consider meeting with a PR expert.** Even if you are not interested in a full-time PR staff member, consider the merit of hiring a public relations consultant or agency if you need advice on which media outlets to reach out to and how to reach them. These agencies are professionals and already have relationships with the media. And, they are generally willing to do consultations at a relatively inexpensive rate.
5. **Always be prepared with an answer.** If you are scheduled to be interviewed, anticipate questions and rehearse answers with an associate, friend, or spouse beforehand. You don't want to end up having nothing to say and you definitely don't want to be caught not knowing how to answer important questions. Don't be afraid to jot down notes on cards if necessary.
6. **Put together a great online press kit.** Recent surveys show that members of the media prefer that your press kit be online as opposed to printed on paper. This makes it easier for them to access it wherever and whenever they need to. When

creating your online press kit, be sure that you have a clear link from your home page to it, keep the information relevant to what the media needs (this is not intended for the general public), put up all press releases, include any previous media mentions you've received and make sure that your media contact information is easy to find. By taking the time to put together a great media kit you will be helping the press write about you. If they don't have access to basic information such as when your company was started, what exactly you do and who the important individuals in your organization are, you're making their job harder. And if they have to do extra work to write a story about you, they may decide not to bother!

7. **Don't forget about the little guys.** In every community there are small newspapers and other circulars that can often provide great exposure for local businesses. If your PR efforts are targeted to a specific region, these may offer great opportunities for you. Research what is available and contact the publisher/editor to learn more about how they like to receive story ideas and articles.
8. **Make sure your website is in tip-top shape.** Having your own professional looking website is one of the most important ways to market your business online. With all the networking taking place on the Internet today a website is one of your best tools. Your website address should be included on all business cards, letterhead, signage, and advertising. It's any easy way for both potential customers and the media to learn more about your business and how to contact you. Be sure to include an online media kit on your site as well to make it as easy as possible for the media to get the information they need about your business.
9. **Don't tell a reporter that you are buying an ad.** Although it may seem like a good idea to mention to a report you are pitching that you plan on buying an ad in their publication, it may actually work against you. Reporters do not like the thought that you can buy a mention and it will certainly not make them want to do a story on you. So even if you are buying an ad, it's probably best not to mention it.
10. **Choose your words carefully when speaking with the media.** One of the most important things to remember when dealing with the media is to not say anything "off the record." It might end up showing up in the paper or on television and could ruin your image and cause you to have to do some major damage control. In general, it is best to say as little as possible, and to have rehearsed answers to potential questions. This applies particularly to questions that might result in controversial answers.
11. **Make the complex as simple as possible.** Be concise and make every attempt to simplify complex information in your PR materials, website, press releases, presentations and every PR piece that you produce. For instance, the next time that you are working on a presentation, create a website-like navigation bar on the side of your PowerPoint presentation. This helps viewers locate their current location within the larger presentation. Again, keep it clear and concise so as not to confuse your audience.

12. **Remember that networking is key.** You should be working continuously to expand your network. Whenever you make a new contact, ask for referrals to other prospects and potential partners. Once you have the information, immediately enter it into your database or give it to your contact manager. Remember that every new person with whom you form a relationship can help to get the word out about your business. In return, you may be able to help them as well. Both of these situations can result in very positive PR for your organization.
13. **Consider hiring an image consultant.** While you may not need to work with a consultant continuously, when you want to make a positive impression on the community this is often a good way to get fresh ideas about how you can better appeal to your target audience. Presenting the right image is essential for small business public relations. Start by identifying who your customers and other stakeholders are and what they expect from someone in your position. You may wish to have current customers help you evaluate your image using interviews and questionnaires. Then determine how you can use their feedback and expectations to present yourself as someone they can trust and want to do business with. These are all things that an image consultant can help you with.
14. **Keep track of any media mentions you get.** It's always important to know what is being said about you. And keeping track of your media mentions means you can use that publicity as part of your online media kit or as a jumping off point to get additional media coverage. If you're getting a lot of publicity, there are online services that will monitor the media for you. For smaller businesses a service such as Google Alerts (<http://www.google.com/alerts>) is a good option.
15. **Develop a simple PR plan.** You don't need a complex plan, but by taking the time to map out a few basics you can help ensure the success of your PR efforts. Start by identifying what you want to accomplish for your business, how you want to be seen by your target audience and what important facts you want to convey about your business. Then take it a step further and map out a strategy for achieving your objectives. This should include a list of tactics you will use such as press releases, articles, public speaking, etc. Starting with this simple task can make it easier to stay focused on the type of PR that will help you achieve your business goals.
16. **Make your media coverage do double duty.** A major component of public relations is "planting" feature stories or news in newspapers, magazines, television or radio programs. When a favorable story about your business appears in the press, you not only gain the short-term benefits of the positive publicity, but you can also use reprints of the article as a powerful marketing tool. Enclosing a copy of the article with your brochures and sales letters can boost your credibility immeasurably. It's also a great way to show potential partners that you are legitimate.
17. **Know whom your target audience includes.** It is amazing how many people set out on a public relations campaign without first identifying exactly who they want to

target their activities to. Start by identifying who your ideal customer is and how you may be able to reach them. Where do they live? What newspapers and magazines do they read? Where do they spend time online? Then consider whom else you may want to reach with your PR campaign. For example you may want to find new partners or vendors through your campaign. All of these different audiences need to be carefully considered when planning your PR efforts.

18. **Stay away from controversy.** Whenever possible, try to avoid hot topics that can give rise to hot tempers. Stick with news that is as uncontroversial as possible, or you could risk losing the attention of your audience. Focus on news that matters to the largest possible audience, yet focuses on themes that are important to your business.
19. **Don't overlook Craigslist.** If you're not already familiar with the phenomenon that is Craigslist, now is the time to learn about it. These simple sites are available for almost every major city across North America and get an unbelievable amount of traffic. If you're looking to target certain cities and/or regions then Craigslist is a great avenue for you. Although there are certain rules to posting, it is a PR goldmine for the right types of businesses.
20. **Understand the different between publicity, advertising and public relations.** Publicity is defined as any public mention of you or your business. It might be positive, negative or neutral. Advertising is when you have to pay for a mention such as a magazine ad. Public relations refers to a strategic plan for communicating with your target audience. Although it shapes the message, how it is delivered and when it is delivered – it cannot complete control it. For example, when you publish a press release you do not have control over when or where it will be used by the media (or even if they will get your business information right!)
21. **Use multiple different ways to increase your visibility.** Getting a mention in a newspaper or magazine is just one of the ways that you can use PR to gain exposure for your business. Also consider using public speaking, attending trade shows, participating in forums, posting comments on blogs, sponsoring or running special events and even developing relationships with the media by providing them timely information that they can use to write stories (even if it's not all about you!) The goal is to be where your target audience spends their time so they see you and learn about your business and what you offer.
22. **Know what you want to accomplish with your PR campaign.** Public relations can be an inexpensive and effective way to spread the word about your business. But before you get started, it's important that you take the time to set goals for each PR activity. The key is to FOCUS. Understand your audience and what they want, know where you fit into the market and have a plan for how you can use PR to reach your overall business goals. By knowing where you want to end up you'll be better equipped to choose PR activities that will be effective.
23. **Clear up misconceptions.** Any business owner can tell you that image weakness is one of the major causes of failure. If you are sensing that your image needs some

improvement, take some time to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of your small business' current image. Ask yourself what misconceptions or negative perceptions need to be corrected. And then begin to develop a plan for correcting these perceptions.

24. **If you're selling a physical product, make sure the photo looks great.** High quality product photos can mean the difference between a professional looking site that sells well, and one that doesn't. It can be expensive to have a professional photographer take pictures of your products, which is why many small business owners don't bother. But with a few supplies from the hardware store you can actually create your own at home studio for next to nothing. Search Google for "create your own lightbox" to get instructions.
25. **Don't overlook the social networking sites.** There are dozens of social networking sites that have sprung up all over the web. When planning your PR campaign, don't overlook this important source of traffic. To learn more read the article "How to Leverage Web 2.0 & Social Media Sites to Market Your Brand & Control Your Message" at <http://www.seomoz.org/article/social-media-marketing-tactics>
26. **Make sure you have a great product or service before you start a PR campaign.** Too many people make the mistake of starting a PR campaign to get a "buzz" going about a new product that is not even available yet. As a result they have interested customers who want to buy and nothing to offer them! All this does is send customers to the competition. A better approach is to ensure that your product or service is ready to go BEFORE you start your PR campaign. You'll then be able to take orders immediately and see the full benefit of your PR efforts.
27. **Know your audience.** To be successful with a PR campaign you have to know exactly who your audience is and what message will be meaningful to them. If you try to send the wrong message or through the wrong channels you'll miss your target and your efforts will be wasted. If your ideal customer reads Vogue then don't waste time trying to get a mention in Field and Stream!
28. **Analyze your branding.** Devise a strategy to freshen up your business. This could include changing your company's name and logo, changing your product mix, or even dropping some customers and courting others. Doing so could drum up new business and keep old customers coming back.
29. **Investigate PR firms carefully.** If you decide to enlist the assistance of a professional when changing your organization's image, be clear on what you want from a public relations effort. Some things a public relations firm can do for you are to get you positive exposure in the media, create and conduct special events, and help you build and maintain a solid reputation.
30. **Learn how to think like a reporter.** When first starting out with PR, many businesses often approach members of the media as though they care about what they sell or what they do. The reality is that reporters don't care about you. They're

inundated all day long with requests from hundreds of other people just like you and they quite honestly see it as a hassle. They are strapped for time and – like everyone else – just want to do their job as quickly and easily as possible. If you want to get their attention you have to think like them. That means only approaching them with ideas and press releases that will make their job easier. If you have something truly useful that will make it quicker and easier for them to write an article or produce a television segment then they'll gladly listen to you. But be sure to present it in an easy to understand manner and make sure all of the information they'll need is readily available.

31. **Don't settle for the first PR firm you encounter.** Interview a number of public relations firms and get their ideas on how they can help your business. If you're looking for only local publicity, hire a local firm. If you want to go further with your PR, look for a company that has prior experience handling larger scale projects. It's always a great idea to ask for references before settling on the firm you'll use.
32. **Work closely, and be honest with your PR people.** Once you've hired a public relations firm for your small business, keep your account executive up to date and fully informed about everything going on. Treat the account executive as if they were part of your strategic team. Otherwise, your PR attempts may not be as successful as they could be.
33. **Watch what your competitors are doing.** Keeping an eye on your competitors' PR efforts can give you some good ideas for your own campaign. Did they get a good mention in an article? Send a letter to the editor with your take on the topic. Are they planning a special event? Hold an event of your own. There is a lot to be learned from watching what others in your industry are doing and using some of their best techniques.
34. **Publicize your name, as well as your organization.** Don't underestimate the market value of your name. By using their names over and over to promote their talents, Oprah Winfrey and Martha Stewart have turned small businesses into enormous enterprises. You should focus your PR efforts on your name as well as the name and mission of your organization. The next time that you give an interview, consider answering for yourself instead of for your organization – but be sure to keep the message consistent with the mission of your organization.
35. **Start by fact finding.** If you want to really develop a killer PR campaign, then you need to spend some serious time fact finding first. You need to know the complete history of your industry, what works and what doesn't and what keeps a customer coming back. Without this wealth of information, you may be unprepared to truly offer your potential customers something of value. Fact finding can be the best way to become a true expert in your field since there are more organizations that skip fact finding than there are organizations who utilize it.
36. **Stick with it.** When it comes to using PR successfully, the most important word for you to remember is persistence. If you take the time to develop a plan and then work

continuously toward carrying out that plan, you will see results for your efforts. It won't happen overnight, but your patience and perseverance will be rewarded.

Writing and Distributing Press Releases

37. **Use online press release services.** There are lots of great online services for getting your press release out there without spending an arm and a leg. PRWeb.com (<http://www.prweb.com>) has a great mix of tools for distributing press releases as well as hosting high resolution images, permanent redirects for URLs and a podcast feature for certain levels of press releases. PRWeb.com also offers a trackback URL on press releases so blogs are encouraged to link to them. Other highly regarded online wire services include PRNewswire.com, BusinessWire.com and PR.com.
38. **Don't forget the "5 Ws".** Who, What Where When, Why (and How) are the most important questions that you should answer in every one of your press releases. Omitting even one of these answers will leave your audience with incomplete information. Have someone proofread your release and ask them to note the "5 Ws". If they have trouble quickly identifying any of these key points then a rewrite is needed.
39. **Consider hiring a pro to write your press release.** Make your press release stand out by having it written by a professional public relations consultant or agency. They have experience and know how to get across the right image for your business and do it in a way that will get the attention of the media. Of course there is cost associated with this, but even one mention in a national publication will mostly likely give you a substantial return on your investment.
40. **Avoid hype when writing a press release.** When you are writing a press release for your business, be careful to avoid words that are designed to sell instead of inform. For example, "one of a kind", "amazing" and "the best" are too much hype for a press release. Instead write your press release as though it is an interesting story designed to inform rather than sell the reader.
41. **Tell them how to contact you.** Believe it or not, one of the most commonly forgotten pieces of information in any press release is the contact information. How will people find you if you don't tell them? Always include a clear statement at the end of every release that says exactly how you can be reached. Most experts recommend including a contact name, website address, email address and phone number if possible.
42. **Never follow up immediately after you submit a press release.** If you start contacting a report or editor immediately after you submit your press release, chances are that you will do little more than annoy them. And people who annoy members of the media usually find their releases end up in the garbage! Instead, allow a couple of

days for the receiver to contact you. If you get no response within two days, follow up with a quick phone call. But whatever you do, be sure not to call at deadline time!

43. **Make the headline enticing.** Whether you are sending a pitch letter/email or writing a press release for publishing, you need to pay special attention to your headline or subject line. If you are sending an email, and the subject line does not grab the publisher's attention – it won't be read. If you publish a press release with a boring headline – it won't be read. Keep it interesting and enticing so that the reader wants to learn more. One trick for attracting more attention is to use a number in the headline or email subject line such as "10 Ways to Tell if Your Husband is Cheating" or "What 73% of People Say They Will NEVER Do".
44. **Address the biggest benefit right in your headline.** When writing your headline or subject line for a press release or email pitch letter, a great technique is to include the biggest benefit of your product or service. This will attract the attention of the reader and get them interested before they read a single word of your actual release. It's also great for press releases that you distribute online because it also works very well with potential customers who stumble across your release in the search engines.
45. **If at first you don't succeed, change your approach.** If you published a press release but don't seem to be attracting a lot of new customers then it might be time to revisit your approach. One of the nice things about public relations, and press release distribution in particular, is that if your first attempt does not work you can easily modify your strategy for next time. Try rewriting your press release with a different angle or tone. Or consider hiring a professional writer who will take a different approach than you did.
46. **Longer is not necessarily better.** Although in the past the average press release tended to be 1,000 words or more, that is not necessarily the correct approach today. Nowadays less is more! If you can say it in two pages then great. But saying it in one or less is even better. Start writing your press release by trying to condense everything you want to say into 120 words. It will be challenging, but if you are able to weed out unnecessary words you are more likely to get and keep your target audience's attention.
47. **Keep your introduction to under 40 words.** If you are unable to express the point of your press release in 40 words or less, then chances are that you are trying to cover too much in your release. Remember, you want to make each press release about only one newsworthy event. Whether that's your big launch, an important new partnership, the results of a survey you conducted, a charity you're donating to... whatever the topic is, it should be very focused. If you have other things to announce then write multiple releases.
48. **Don't use attachments when submitting via email.** Internet and email security is a hot topic these days. If you are sending a press release or pitch letter via email it's a good idea to avoid using attachments. Otherwise, there is a very high likelihood that your email will be deleted, filtered or even considered spam. In fact, most reporters

are being instructed by their companies not to open email attachments at all to avoid infecting their computers with viruses.

49. **Keep paragraphs short and to the point.** Once you've written your press release, check to see that none of your paragraphs contains more than 2 or 3 sentences. If so, then you are trying to put in too much information or you are using more words than you need to. Remember, members of the media read a lot of releases and they need to be able to get the information as quickly and easily as possible. If you make them work harder by using long paragraphs and complex sentences they'll get tired and move on before they understand what your release is even about.
50. **Focus on the first ten words.** The first ten words of your press release may just be the most important. The purpose of these words is to grab the attention of your reader, and let them know that the information contained in the release is relevant to them. So don't waste this important opportunity with a weak introductory paragraph that gives little information. Try to give the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How in the first paragraph and then use the rest of the release to elaborate on each point.
51. **If you don't have a reason to publish a press release, don't publish one.** This is an important rule to follow. If you don't have something newsworthy to announce, then you should simply wait until you do. Far too often businesses write releases on things happening in their company that no one else cares about but them. If you're looking to create some news, take time to get involved in a charitable event, run an interesting contest, conduct a survey or develop a new product or service. These are just a few of the many ways that you can create news that is worthy of a press release.
52. **Write your press releases for humans AND search engines.** Although they may look for different types of information in a press release, humans and search engines both want the same thing – great content. Learning how to write a press release so that reporters, potential customer and search engines all find it useful is time well spent. Once your release is written, research two or three relevant keyword terms that are related to your press release and that people would actually be searching for. Then ensure those keywords are included in the title, first paragraph and last paragraph. Be sure that your release still reads naturally and does not sound like you're writing just for the search engines. This can be tricky at first, but with practice you'll soon find writing optimized press releases takes very little extra time.
53. **Don't forget a link to your site.** When submitting a press release online, be sure that you include a link to your website. According to a press release published by BusinessWire.com, 9 out of 10 submissions that they receive do not include this important piece of information. Don't miss this great opportunity to send people to your site to learn more about what you do, download your special report or join your newsletter.
54. **Don't expect that your press release will be printed verbatim.** Once you submit a press release, it's up to the media how they want to use it. Sometimes it simply

triggers a story idea for them and your business or product ends up not even getting a mention. Unfortunately that is just how it goes sometimes with PR. Don't be discouraged if this happens to you.

55. **Use the forums as a good test of what is newsworthy.** Online forums are an incredible resource and should be an important part of any public relations campaign. Not only are they a great way to research your market, meet potential partners and get the word out about your products and services, but they can also be invaluable in helping you test your press release ideas. Make a post on a forum related to your business about the "news" you are considering writing a release about. Use your best headline idea as the subject line and then see what kind of response you get. If no one reads your post then chances are it is not news that others care about!

Pitching Members of the Media

56. **Use online services to give your PR efforts a boost.** There are a few websites that allow you to reach the media to promote your business at affordable rates. PRWeb.com allows companies to post press releases free of charge. Topics include everything from construction and education to religion and travel. Yearbook.com annually publishes a list of experts in industries as varied as education, acupuncture, health and UFOs. The website now boasts 100,000 hits per month from journalists seeking sources. Bacon's is one of the premier media listing services. It can distribute your press release to a customized audience chosen from its database of print and broadcast journalists. An individually addressed one-page release sent to 200 journalists costs \$150. Another website, eNewsRelease.com, acts as a customized wire service and can send 50 press releases to a list of targeted media outlets that cover your industry for only \$49.95. Exploring these low cost options can make your PR campaign very affordable.
57. **Join the blogosphere.** Don't overlook blogs as a great source of publicity. They can be as influential as many print publications. Bloggers love to be on the cutting edge and are always looking for new sites to review, points of view to debate, and new products to introduce to their readers. However, there are some important rules to keep in mind before approaching a blog owner. Since they do not have a set editorial calendar, it can be a challenge to know what to submit to them and when. Before pitching a blogger, it's best to read their blog archives to get a feel for what they like to print. Then send them a very targeted pitch instead of a press release since most bloggers do not write posts from press releases.
58. **Take the time to develop a relationship with the media.** It won't happen overnight, but with some hard work you can develop a relationship with members of your local media that will serve you well for years to come. Start by reading your local publications and identifying the people who write for the sections where you would like to be mentioned. Then contact them with your press releases, story pitches and

any interesting information you think they can use in their stories. Every time something new happens in your business let them know. If you contact them in an appropriate manner with good information that is relevant to what they write, you will most certainly get a mention at some point.

59. **Don't be afraid to pitch story ideas.** If you would like the media to do a story on you or a topic related to your business, go ahead and contact them with your "pitch". The best approach is generally to start by sending a pitch letter that succinctly outlines your idea. Make sure it is not a big ad for you company, but rather a unique angle that the report can use to create something his or her readers will be interested in.
60. **Send a letter before you make that phone call.** Unless a media outlet has published information that says they are open to suggestions for stories via telephone, it is best to contact them in writing or via email rather than phoning. Otherwise, your calls may go unanswered. After you have sent your pitch letter, wait a couple of days before phoning to follow up and discuss the idea further.
61. **Remember the Rule of 7.** When following up with members of the media, the rule of thumb is to contact them a maximum of 7 times. This includes both emails and telephone calls. After 7 times do not contact them again – but make sure you're ready just in case they get in touch with you!
62. **Learn how to follow up effectively.** The worst thing you can say when you call or email a reporter is "Did you get my press release?" Instead simply say that you sent them some information and then explain how they may be able to use that information. They don't care about your press release; they care about what you've sent them that may help them write an interesting story their readers will enjoy. Start your conversation on the right foot and you'll be more likely to get their attention.
63. **Never ask to be notified when your story is printed.** A lot of people make this mistake. Remember, it's not the reporter's job to provide you with copies of the story or even inform you when it runs. You should be monitoring the media for mentions of your company and products and if you would like copies you can order them from the circulation department.
64. **Take advantage of editorial calendars.** All print (and some online) publications use an editorial calendar to organize what topics will be covered in upcoming issues. Published for 12 months at a time, these calendars are a great tool for anyone looking to get a mention in a specific publication. Use this information to send timely story ideas, pitches and press releases on topics that will be featured in the coming months. Editorial calendars are available at not charge from the publication's advertising department.
65. **Remember the 15 second rule.** In general, when you call a media outlet to pitch an idea, you have approximately 15 seconds to convince them to take your idea and run with it. If you previously sent a letter, and are calling to follow up and make sure it

was received, be sure to remind the person on the other end of the phone that you already sent some information. Even if they call you, the 15 second rule applies. You want to very succinctly give the top 3 reasons that your idea is a great one.

66. **Don't be afraid to point out the negatives.** Reporters like to write balanced stories that tell both the good and bad. So if you're pitching a story don't be afraid to give the downside as well as the upside. Of course you'll want to be sure that your company ends up looking good in the end!
67. **Have the media tell you what they want.** The website PRLeads.com (<http://www.prleads.com>) is a great service designed to connect the media with business owners. Every day more than 100 requests are added to the site by members of the media looking for people to interview on specific topics. PRLeads.com members are sent information on these requests including contact information for the reporter. If you're serious about doing a PR campaign that will get you some major exposure, this is definitely a service worth looking in to.

How to Get the Media Interested

68. **Position your grand opening as a human interest story.** If you have a new or expanded business, hold a grand opening and invite the media. Sometimes, the media is looking for local "human interest" stories to cover. Be sure to include business newspapers, which are often willing to write about new companies.
69. **Stay in the spotlight.** As much as possible, try to stay in the public spotlight. Communicate to the media what's happening at your company on a regular basis. New products, new staff, new partners and even success stories are all newsworthy. And newsworthy stories bring the attention of potential customers and partners.
70. **Offer your expertise to the media.** Is there a local or national news story that your company has the expertise to comment on? If so, get in touch with the media and give them a statement containing your analysis, suggestions or related information. After doing this a few times you'll find that reporters start contacting you when they need a quote for a piece they're working on.
71. **Be a part of your community.** Community events can give you a captive audience. However, before you spend too much time or money, keep in mind that they are often labor intensive and may not be cost-efficient. Be clear in your planning process and know as far as possible in advance whether the event is a public relations event or a fundraising event. This will help you to determine the best approach for your presence at the event.

72. **Remember that real life stories are the best illustrations of your mission.** Send media outlets as many “feel-good” stories as possible, such as “you have changed my life” testimonials. Testimonials are always an excellent addition to a PR piece and the public loves them. Take a few minutes to think about several people who could write an honest testimonial for you.
73. **Create a top 10 list.** Take a tip from David Letterman and create a top ten list about something in your business. If you're a beautician, write an article titled, "Top Ten Most Popular Hairstyles for Women." People love these – especially if you include humor. The community will see that you enjoy your business and want to entertain your customers. Another tip is that numbers attract the eye more than words. So even if it's not the number 10, start off your headlines with numbers whenever you possibly can.
74. **Introduce NEW information.** Offering surprising facts about your industry or business attracts the media because it offers some new and possibly exciting information that they may have never before published. For instance, if you're a recruitment firm, you could present an article titled, "The Average Starting Salary of an MBA Graduate is 40 Percent Higher than Their Pre-MBA Earnings." Often conducting a survey can be a great way to gather new and interesting information that you can create a press release from.
75. **Use holidays to your advantage.** Tying your business in with holidays or special days is a great way to strike up some publicity. For example, tell the media how your massage therapy business helps to reduce stress during the Christmas season and provides gift certificates for welcome relief. Be sure to contact reporters in plenty of time though. They are often preparing their stories months before the actual holiday arrives.
76. **Demonstrate your connection with history.** A great way to publicize your business is to tie it into something that took place in the past. Go to your local library and find articles from 50 years ago that may somehow tie into the product or services you provide. These kinds of things provide great features for both newspapers and television news.
77. **Do something different than your competitors.** Many times, the most successful PR campaigns succeed because they were the first to come up with a specific technique or offer. Be the first to offer a 200 percent double your money back guarantee, or the first to offer an on-site car wash with every sale. Be the first to give your employees ownership in your business or to offer employees the day off to work together toward raising money for a specific charity. Think of something that you can claim to be the first at doing in your industry or community. Not only will you be talked about, but if you focus on creating a better experience for your customers or employees you'll also gain a lot of respect.
78. **Showcase your best customer.** Do you have a customer that uses your products in an unusual way to achieve extraordinary results? For example, if you run a gym is one of

your customers a bodybuilding champion? If you own a bike shop is one of your customers a champion racer? If you manage an electronics store do you have a customer who has invented a whiz-bang contraption? These stories can tie into your business and generate publicity through the popularity of the high profile customer.

79. **Take advantage of adverse experiences.** If your business has ever been through a tragic experience, like burning down or bankruptcy, and then gets back on its feet, this makes for a great feel-good story and could generate a lot of publicity. This shows the public that your business is resilient and shows that you, as the business owner, believe in your business. Although no one wants to find themselves in a situation where they can take advantage of an adverse experience, it is definitely something that will help you to rebuild your business should you ever need to.
80. **Position yourself as a problem solver.** A great way to get some publicity is to write a general interest story about the problem that your product or service solves. If you're a car detailer, you could write about how oxidation and rust destroys the integrity of your car and makes it unsafe to drive. If you sell website services, write about hosting problems or the effects of poor website design and how to solve it. Potential customers love to know "what's in it for them" and positioning yourself as the person who can solve their problems is a great way to become known as an expert in your industry.
81. **Focus on why you got started in the first place.** Publicizing why you started your business in the first place is a great way to explain to people the nature of your business and what you stand for. If you started your business because you were dissatisfied with the provider you were using (or the employer you worked for), let the press know. For instance, you went into the Italian restaurant business because the Italian food in the local area wasn't authentic. Or maybe you started a pool cleaning service because of the lousy job service providers were doing on your own pool.
82. **Give back to the community.** Attract the public by developing an annual award that you give out to someone in the community or a business in your industry. For instance, give an award to a local outstanding teacher that has gone above and beyond the call of duty. Or if you're a supplier you can give an award to the best business customer in the industry you service. This is a simple thing to do but wins you big points with customers and the local media.
83. **Run a fun contest.** Contests themselves are not all that exciting. But if you take it to a new level and run a "silliest thing" or "dumbest mistake" contest with your customers you may be amazed at the exposure it brings you. For instance, if you're a shoe repair shop, ask your customers to submit pictures of their silliest pair of shoes. If you're a sporting goods retailer ask your customers for the dumbest mistakes they've ever made while camping. These are great human-interest stories that the press will love. And you shouldn't have any shortage of material since people generally love to share their stories and appear in the news!

84. **Sponsor events that give back to the community.** Sponsoring a local community service project is a great way to reach out to the public. For example, if you're a dry cleaner, clean the clothes for all the visitors of the local shelter. If you're a fast food retailer, hold a free lunch day for disabled children. If you're a car repair shop, offer oil and lubes to the parents of boy scouts and donate all the proceeds to the Boy Scouts of America. Get creative and come up with some fun things you can do that will give back to your community and get you publicity at the same time!
85. **Show your current customers that they are just as important as new customers.** Too often, most of a business' focus is on attracting new customers. Instead, spend some time focusing on your existing customers. Throw a one-of-a-kind customer appreciation theme party such as a luau with Polynesian cultural dancers or a magical theme party. Customers can even bring their children to watch a magician do incredible tricks, while they do business or take part in the services your business has to offer. They'll be impressed that you did something special to recognize them and will no doubt spread the word to their friends.
86. **Encourage your employees to give back to the community.** Close down your business for one day a year and have your entire staff do a day of charity work. Headlines would read, "Local Print Shop Closes Doors to Help the Needy!" Not only would this get your publicity, but it will build trust and respect with your customers.
87. **Make charitable donations.** Establishing a presence in your community is essential for small businesses. One way to do this is to make donations to local businesses and organizations. Or you could show commitment to family by closing your store early to attend your child's soccer game or to go to the local high school football game. This will make the community see you as an active member. Remember that many charitable organizations will publish an annual list of donors. Some public theater groups will publish their donors in the program used throughout each season. So there are definitely opportunities to use this strategy to gain exposure as well.
88. **Invite the community to be a part of your organization.** Create an advisory board of your customers within your community and publicize the names of the members. Have the board express ideas about what your small business could do within the community. The positive press that will come along with an open invitation for the community will serve as positive PR, as will the word of mouth advertising that your advisory board members will generate on your behalf.
89. **Get published.** Write educational articles for trade journals, newspapers, and other publications that reach your target audience. They'll get your name in front of the public and add to your credibility. Credibility is an excellent PR technique, and if your target customers spot the information and believe in you, they will be calling you in the future.
90. **Schedule some public speaking events.** Public relations is all about finding ways to get out there and get noticed by customers, members of the media and even potential joint venture partners. A great way to do this is to teach a class or give a talk on your

area of expertise. This can be at a local college, your Chamber of Commerce or even online. Simply put together a detailed overview of what you'll be discussing and contact people who may be interested in helping you host and promote it. These types of events are often mentioned in the newspaper and can be used whenever appropriate as further proof of your expertise.

91. **Tie your business to current events.** If you can in some way connect your business with a current newsworthy event, then this is a great focus for your next press release. This can be something as substantial as a war or simple as Britney Spear's latest antics. The key is to find a logical link between what you do and the current event. When using this type of approach, issue recognition is one of the best ways to decide if your press release is newsworthy. Will your intended audience be able to immediately understand the issue you are addressing? If so then go for it.
92. **Take advantage of your association with a public figure.** If you are affiliated or involved with a well known public figure or celebrity, take advantage of the opportunity to drop their name in your next press release. Even if this person is not well known to the general public, if he or she is prominent in your industry then use that angle. You and your business look better by association!
93. **Accept that timing is everything.** If the newsworthy event that you are referring to in your press release has lost public interest - or it happened some time in the past – you need to look for a new approach. Timeliness is a priority in the world of PR. You don't want to be yesterday's news! Avoid this by getting in the habit of sending out your press release as soon as something big happens in your business. This usually means writing the release beforehand, editing it immediately following and sending it out within minutes. Or in the case of a new product release or scheduled event, send a press release before the date even arrives. You may then be able to follow up with another release after and get extra exposure.
94. **Conduct a survey.** If you are looking for something newsworthy to report in a press release, generate your own news! Performing a survey will give you important statistics and feedback that you can use to improve your products and services, as well as create a newsworthy story that can be the topic of your next press release. Publishing survey results can also be a great way to show how your product meets an important need among your target audience. No one is likely to read a press release all about how great YOU think your product is. But they would probably be interested to learn that 67% of your market admits they need a product just like yours.
95. **If you receive positive press or feedback, use it to your advantage.** If you are the subject of someone else's press release, reprint the release with the original contact information in addition to your own. Or, if you receive a letter containing positive feedback about your products and services, use it to craft a press release showing how your customers feel about your business. Both of these techniques are easy ways to create something newsworthy when not much else is going on with your business.

96. **Send a letter to the editor.** Writing a letter to the editor can be a great way to get your name seen and tell people a bit about what you do. And these often have a better chance of being published than a press release. You would be amazed at the number of people who read this section of the newspaper so take advantage of this opportunity to get some free PR! Not sure what to write? Comment on a recent article you read in the paper and explain why you agree or disagree with it. Or add to it with a few extra points and some little known facts. Be certain to include your website and contact information so they know who to attribute the comments to. Writing regular letters to the editor is also a great way to get to know him or her. When you later submit press releases they will be more likely to print them.
97. **Post a video on YouTube.** Social networking sites are one of the fastest growing ways for “the little guy” to get their name out there. Creating a funny, unusual or informative video and posting it on YouTube.com can get you lots of attention from bloggers, websites and other online media. It doesn’t have to be something that takes a long time or costs you a lot of money. Think up something that will be of interest to your target audience, grab your camera and start shooting!
98. **Look for ways to be included in newspapers and magazines.** Lots of different magazines and newspapers have a section where they feature websites that are of interest to their readers. Submit your site for consideration by learning which reporter is in charge of this section and how they like to receive site recommendations.
99. **Send tips to newsletter publishers.** A great way to get a mention in other people’s newsletters is to send them a glowing testimonial, tip or other piece of helpful information. Be sure to let them know that they are welcome to share this information with their readers. Don’t forget to include your name and website address so they can give you credit.
100. **Write a bio that is interesting.** The media is not interested in dull people. Let’s face it; they don’t make very good stories or interesting interviews. So show them that you are a creative and fun person by writing a bio that is different than all the other boring bios they read. Instead of just repeating your resume verbatim, tell them what you’re passionate about and let them see the real you. You can always link to your complete resume from your bio so that all of your education, job history and achievements are viewable. But when it comes to the actual bio, make it memorable and don’t be afraid to let your personality shine through. You just may be chosen for a story or interview over one of your competitors who has a boring bio!
101. **Make a name for yourself.** When writing stories, the media looks for people to interview who are experts in their field. Show them that you are THE SOURCE for the information they need by creating a blog, publishing a newsletter, holding teleseminars and even doing public speaking events. When they search online for potential interviewees they will be more likely to choose you if you appear to be a knowledgeable resource.