



Often, PR can seem out of reach for small businesses and territory of only the big players. That simply isn't the case. It does take hard work and time but is well worth the effort. If you are thinking about raising your profile then here are some handy hints to help you on your way, from Debbie Leven, Director, Profile Matters.

Understand what journalists want

If you have a good understanding of what journalists want then you can save yourself both time and effort by tailoring your approach and material. Think in terms of three key elements – people, conflict and scandal. You'll probably want to avoid conflict and scandal so you need to focus on human interest - the personal story, the impact the news has on people. Journalists also look for other ingredients: what is new; research to support or challenge thinking; extremes – the biggest, highest etc; change that has an impact on people; timeliness – something that it has just happened. The journalist doesn't want 'puff' about your company – they want to know about people (that may be individuals or other businesses/organisations etc) with some of those other ingredients.



Know the audience - Stories must be relevant, and of interest, to the audience. There must also be a 'peg' for the story – a reason for the story. Usually, it concerns something that has just happened. You can also 'create' a 'peg' by linking your story to, for example, anniversaries or forthcoming events. It's important to review copies of publications, and watch/listen to the relevant programmes that you want to target, to get a feel for the types of stories that will be of interest. The profile of the readership, age, demographics etc, is important too so that you can tailor your approach and copy to suit.

Become an expert

Journalists want expert opinion – someone who can speak on authority about a subject. You simply need to identify the subjects that will be of interest and approach journalists accordingly. If you review and analyse coverage in target press and media then you will soon get an idea of the types of topics that will appeal and where you can add value. Don't be afraid to approach journalists with ideas for articles. They need your expertise and will value well-written copy as well as new ideas. Also, for an annual fee of about £50 you can list your profile with key words on www.expertsources.co.uk. This is a database that journalists use to seek expert comment for stories they are working on. It's useful to have had some experience of speaking to journalists before you list your details – so that you can make the most of any opportunities.



Use other people's news

There may be press and media that you monitor to see what your competitors are up to. Letters to editors are a great way to get your own coverage by riding on the back of other stories and features. If you do this on an ongoing basis you will also build your reputation and journalists will be encouraged to seek you out for comment.

Build a list – but better still, build relationships

You do need to take time to build up a contacts list. It can sometimes be more cost effective to get a professional to help you. They will have access to media databases that are kept up-to-date. They will also be able to explore the different angles you have in terms of PR so that you get maximum value out of your list – i.e. looking at how you can target at different levels: international, national, local, trade, specialist, lifestyle, ethnic etc depending on your objectives and priorities. If you want to build your list yourself then the Guardian Media Directory is a useful resource – it lists the contact details for 10,000 individuals and companies in the press and media.



Persevere

Not all your efforts will prove successful. Be prepared for disappointment and, at times, frustration. PR is, however, a great addition to your marketing armoury – it supports your other marketing efforts and, particularly with the internet, your PR can now have a longevity that was simply not possible in the past.

Profile Matters provides communication consultancy, training and coaching to small and start-up businesses. Free articles and resources are available at:

www.profilematters.co.uk. For a no obligation chat, or information about the Do It

Yourself PR Toolkit that is soon to be launched, email debbie@profilematters.co.uk