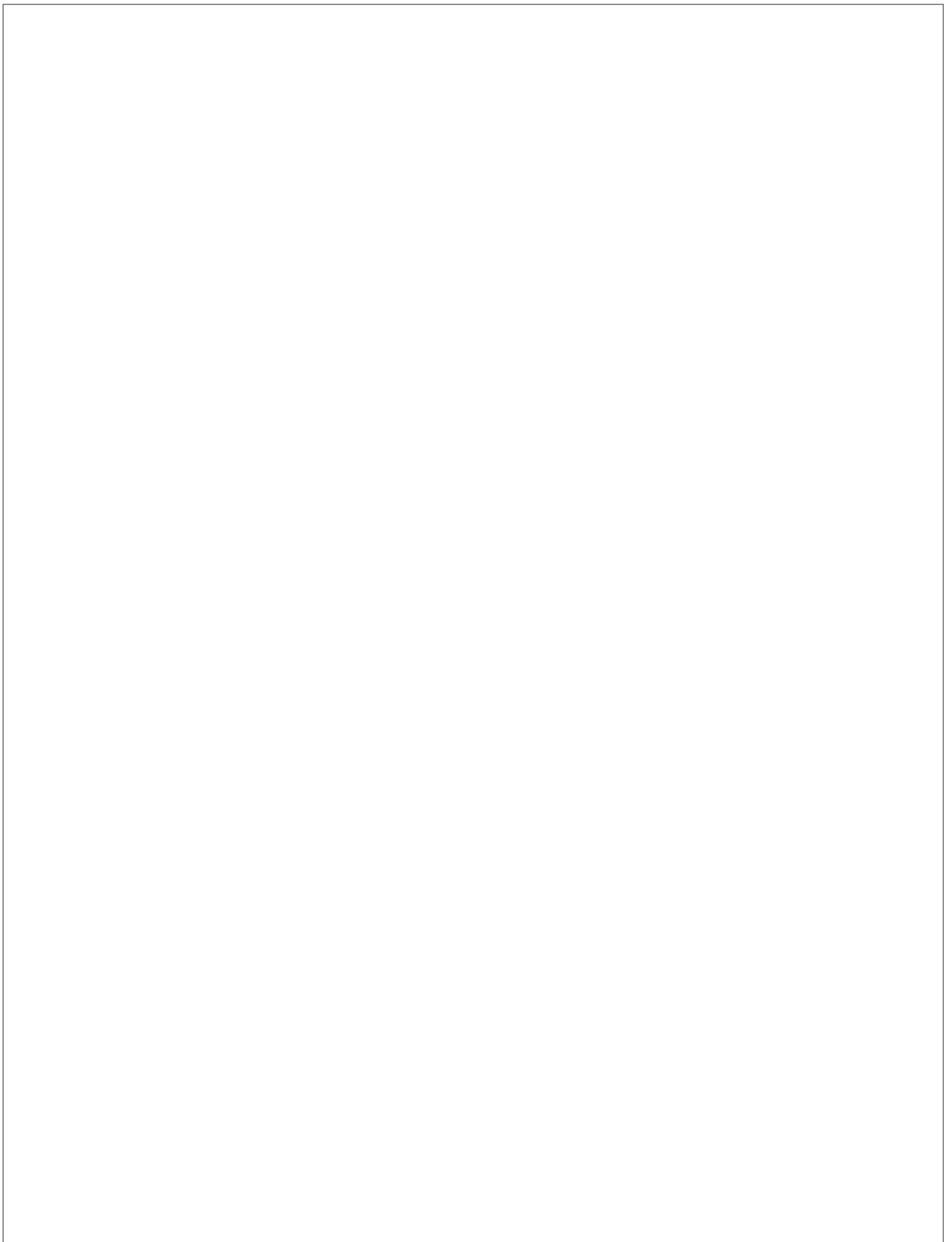


You Can't Write Just One

A Long Range Approach to Getting
the Media Attention You Crave

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Introduction

What business owner doesn't dream of their business taking off beyond their wildest dreams with an appearance on Oprah or a feature in Newsweek?

There is no doubt about it; the promise of free publicity is alluring.

Sending out press releases is a proven strategy that is both inexpensive and effective. You can't ask for much more from a marketing tactic than that. That's why you'll find hundreds of resources that promote press release submission for small business.

The problem is all the information makes the whole process sound like absolute magic.

Send out a press release and soon the media will be knocking down your door trying to get a quote from the newest expert in your field – YOU!

While some of it sounds just a little too good to be true, there are so many success stories that you are more than tempted to give this press release thing a try.

You spend hours studying the craft of writing a press release.

You struggle to choose just the right words into just the right format.

You aim for that perfect combination of concise but compelling in fewer than four hundred words and eventually produce a press release that passes inspection – timely and informational and devoid of sales jargon.

The battle only half over, you then face all the details of distribution. You track down contact names and information of media targets. You create accounts at all the online press release services you can find. You get ready to meet your success...

You send out your finely crafted release to the world and...

Nothing happens.

The phone doesn't ring. Reporters aren't knocking on your door. Your email inbox doesn't overflow with requests from reporters.

If you're really lucky, you'll get a call from your local newspaper requesting further information or even an interview. You get excited thinking that this is your break into the big leagues...only to be disheartened when the article comes out and only your closest friends seem to notice.

All that work - all those hours of research and learning and writing and the response is less than earth shattering.



An Opportunity for Disillusionment

If you've tried used publicity as a marketing tactic before, the sequence of events above may resonate with you. If so, you aren't alone. Thousands have tried to use press releases in the hopes of increasing their business only to be disappointed by the results.

Part of this disappointment comes about simply due to the reality that a small part of public relations is always unpredictable. No one can accurately predict what news stories are going to capture the public's interest and imagination. No one can say when a bigger story is going to come along and unseat a scheduled feature.

Press releases are not magic. Let's face it; you didn't really think they were actually magic. You were just hoping it would be that easy.

If they were such a magic pill – everyone would send them out and dance in streets of gold and professional PR firms wouldn't be able to charging \$10,000 a month retainers to represent their clients.

The good news is they aren't rocket science either. You don't need professional representation and you don't have to waste endless hours of your own time to get the coverage you desire.

All you need is a plan.

Well – a plan, a few tools, a willingness to keep trying and a bit of patience along the way. Let's meet two business women and see what a difference a plan can make.

Typical Tracy

Tracy is a fairly typical home business owner.

She started her business three years ago as a means to stay home with her family. Her income is steady but not stellar. She struggles to keep her business thriving on a small marketing budget. She's learned most of what she knows networking online through forums and email groups and has bought a few value priced information products over time.

One of the products introduced her to the idea of press releases. It sounded like a great way to get the word out about her business so she followed all the directions and sent one out on a Friday in July to her local paper and to a few national parenting magazines on summer activity tips for pre-teens.

After sending the release, she sits by her phone for days and constantly checks her email to no avail.

Disappointed with the lack of response, Tracy assumes that the fault must lie in the way she wrote the release. So in November, hoping for a pre-Christmas boost, she hires a professional writer from one of her email lists to write a press release for \$25 which she sends out bright and early on a Monday morning to the same outlets she chose in July.

The silence is once again deafening. No one responds to her pitch.

Disgusted by the time and money wasted on her press release efforts, Tracy determines that press releases are not going to work for her business and gives up trying.



To the casual observer, it might appear that Tracy is right – that press releases are not an effective use of resources for her business.

However, when the trained PR eye digs through the details it reveals several possible adjustments that may have increased her chances of attracting coverage.

Lead Time Blind

Like most small business owners seeking publicity for the first time, Tracy neglected to account for the lead time of her media targets. Tracy's summer press release was about two weeks too late for her local paper who tend to cover stories like this at the very start of summer break and nine months too late for the national targets. Her November release was similarly afflicted. National magazines start putting together their holiday editions as early as March so sending a holiday related release during the holiday season is not likely to generate a response.

Sending Into the Void

Typical Tracy made a typical rookie error in the timing of sending out her releases. Fridays tend to be a bad day to send out press releases, especially for a first release and especially in the summer and Monday's are not much better. I didn't realize how true this was until I worked in a radio station and saw first hand that Mondays tend to be filled with meetings and catch-up tasks for the news staff and Fridays tended to be lax work days with everyone gearing up for the weekend.

Your first releases should always be targeted for arrival mid-week.

Once you've developed a relationship with an editor or producer, you can get away with sending releases when you choose. Until then stick with times when you are more likely to get read.

Avoidance of Broadcast Media

By sending her release only to print media, Tracy reduced her odds of attracting media attention. Radio and television are understandably scary – but avoiding them will slow down your publicity progress.

Too Big, Too Soon

While there's no harm in targeting national publications from the outset; it is a mistake to neglect smaller publications. While smaller publications may not have substantial audiences on their own, they do tend to be very targeted. Tracy might've had better results if she had also sent her release to regional parenting publications.

Lack of Follow-Up

As Tracy discovered, sitting by the phone doesn't bring results. Choosing a proactive approach and following up on your submissions may not result in publication, but you will at least learn valuable tips for your next attempt.

Lack of Follow-Through

Repetition is as key to success through publicity as it is any other marketing strategy. On it's own a press release lacks weight, but as part of a relevant campaign it becomes a powerful tool.

As you can see, it really is little things that can make a big difference in the success of your publicity campaign. Fortunately, it doesn't take long to master the factors that will increase your chances of getting the coverage you desire. In fact, all it should take is an investment of about 30 minutes a week to get you well on your way to establishing your expertise and credibility through existing media.

Savvy Sonia

Sonia is the subject of our second case study. *(Pay attention now – there are some golden nuggets of information in this story!)*

Like Tracy, she's been operating her home based business for just over three years and began to experiment with press releases in the past year. She participates in some of the same forums and networking groups that Tracy does and has invested in many of the same informational products.

Other than their approach to marketing there was very little difference between Sonia's business and Tracy's. Unlike Tracy, Sonia chose a more strategic and structured approach to her publicity efforts when she began.

Before sending out her first release, Sonia blocked out two hours of time to devote to planning. She prepared by ordering in Chase's Calendar of Events through her local library and printing up a blank calendar for the year.

On her first pass over the calendar, she quickly recorded personal and business events for the year. She wrote down her children's birthdays, her wedding anniversary and her business anniversary. She also recorded traditional holidays and local special events like the annual blossom festival, rodeo and town founder days.

After that, she skimmed through the event calendars and recorded events that she could adapt for her business. She recorded each event along with notes on how she could adapt the idea for her business.

Next she called her three favorite charity groups and found out when their annual fundraising rushes were scheduled. While most charities accept donations year round, most have one month where they focus their energies on raising awareness and funds.

Once she'd written down the dates, she took a short break from the calendar to take some time to think about what she hoped to achieve through publicity. She knew she wanted to increase her sales locally and hopefully get her product into some local shops. Her kids are still fairly young, so she doesn't want to be away from home very often.

With her goals in mind, Sonia went back to the calendar and chose one event each month that she was going to promote.



As she considered each idea she evaluated it for:

- 1) How well it reflected the needs & interests of her target market?
- 2) How easy the idea and purpose were to express? (In other words, could she sum up the main idea in a sentence)
- 3) How easily it could be tied into her other marketing?
- 4) How much preparation would be required to put it in place?

With her list in hand, Sonia started mapping out a timeline for each month's publicity campaign.

She wrapped up by scheduling in writing time to get her first release started for the following week.

Her first release garnered little attention, but armed with the knowledge that a beginning is only the beginning she stuck to her plan.

As she nears the end of the year she's had several appearances in her local media including coverage in her local paper and a regional parenting magazine, several appearances on a local talk radio station and a brief appearance on her local television morning show.

By taking a long view of publicity, she wasn't disappointed when her first release fell flat. Because she'd mapped the ideas out in advance, she didn't feel pressured to try and come up with something newsworthy and topical each month.

As her youngest is entering grade one in the fall, she's ready to expand her publicity for the coming year. Many of her promotions will be repeated themes from the first year, so planning next year's publicity will be much quicker.

The Takeaway

The great lesson you can glean from these two stories is that you need to have a long range plan for attracting media attention for your small business.

The rise or fall of your PR campaign doesn't rest on one single press release. Instead, you build exposure, relationships and credibility over the calendar year.

You will learn more about developing a strong step by step PR strategy for your business when you attend the **Everlasting PR Plan Seminar** coming up on Wednesday, August 27, 2008 at 9pm Eastern. Sign up at <http://www.everlastingprplan.com> today!

I can't wait to show you more!

Patrysha