

10 PR Secrets No One Will Ever Tell You

When you're trying to pitch your book, the last thing you need is old, outdated or false information. PR and marketing guidelines change frequently and what worked five years ago no longer works today. For some red hot publicity that will get you to the top of the pitching pile, we've unveiled some PR secrets you won't hear anywhere else but here. Trying to get on Oprah? Here are some things we're betting you never knew about getting on her show:

Sending samples and books to the Oprah Show is pretty standard fare for most publicity people but did you know that Oprah's producers actually prefer finding products or books on their own? Instead of pitching the show why not pitch some publications in the Chicago area instead and let a Producer at the Oprah Show "stumble" on it themselves!

If you think that Oprah's producers are just in Chicago, think again. The show is known for having "scouts" all over the country; this means that if you're in Seattle publicizing your book, you might just be getting on the radar screen of one of the most powerful shows on television.

And speaking of getting on a national show, we all know this can be great PR for your book, but did you know that if you don't have proper distribution it might dissuade a producer from featuring your book? You bet. By now most Producers are well aware of the avalanche of books that have inundated the industry. They don't want to look bad for picking a book or product no one can get, so be sure and add an info sheet in your media packet telling the Producer that your book is available nationwide.

Trying to decide when to send out your release? Well, timing does matter! If it's business related, avoid contacting the press between the 15th and 22nd of April, July, and October. That's when publicly held companies release quarterly earnings reports. As for days of the week, Monday is the worst day to send your release. The best day? Thursday. Thursdays are notoriously slow news days.

Got an event coming up? It might make more sense listing your event on craigslist rather than pitching it to local media. Why? Well, if your event is free you can list it on craigslist at no charge and you could potentially drive crowds to your event, as opposed to the sometimes hit and miss efforts from traditional publicity. A couple of things to remember are that you can't list events in multiple cities at the same time; the folks at craigslist check this periodically. Events are kept live on the site until the event date has passed.

Despite what some folks might tell you, faxes do not work. While it might be easy to toss a press release on a fax machine and start sending it out to some media contacts, I can guarantee you 99.9% of the time they'll be ignored and tossed.

Do press kits really work? Well, yes and no. The days of the fancy press kit filled with equally fancy gifts are gone. In fact, more and more the media are paying closer attention to press kits that are more powerful in substance than they are in flash. So keep your press kit lean, mean and real - you'll not only save yourself a lot of expense but you'll probably get your book noticed a lot quicker.

Now the second piece to this is how valid your kit is. By "valid" we mean how much of the information is verifiable. When the media gets your kit the first place they might go to verify the contents is the Web. If your Internet presence doesn't match what your kit says about you, you've probably just lost the interview.

When you're pitching a magazine, many PR folk will tell you to pitch them six to eight months out. The truth is pitching times have shrunk - we've seen magazines accept pitches with only a three-month window. Call first to check when a particular issue will close before assuming you've missed your window.

If you want to get into publications like The Washington Post or Newsweek, don't pitch them, blog on them. Both of these sites (and many other sites with high profile publications) have added a new "Blog Round Up" box on their sites. It reports on people who have blogged on their stories. All techie-babble aside, here's what you do: blog on one of the articles on their site, link it using a trackback link and submit this to Technorati.com. This site will report back to these publications and they'll link to you (and your site) and voila! A feature on Newsweek or whichever publication you chose!

So you see, it's not always about creating the perfect pitch or press release. Sometimes it's about being unconventional, innovative and a tad adventurous. We hope our secrets help you unlock the powerful publicity kingdom!

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About the Author

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