

The #1 Way to Get Publicity - Pick up the phone!

As a small business owner, getting the media attention you deserve is not as difficult as it may seem. In fact, it's just a matter of picking up the phone and being a good sales person!

Here are five tips to help you get started.

1. Research.

Before you contact reporters, be sure you know what they write about and their particular style.

Read their articles, watch their television programs or listen to them on the radio. And you should be able to find their direct contact information with a simple online search via Google or Yahoo! If not, check the media venue's website for additional information.

2. Prepare Your Pitch.

Do you know what you are going to say when you get in touch with the news media?

Prepare your talking points in advance. Create a unique and interesting story angle and be sure you can mention the important facts in one sentence.

You can always elaborate if the reporter seems interested. And if you're new at this, practice pitching your story with a friend or co-worker before moving forward.

3. Pick Up the Phone.

When you have your story-pitch ready to go, contact the appropriate beat reporter directly. Introduce yourself and give the name of your organization. Tell the reporter you have an interesting news story if he or she has a couple of minutes.

At this point, the reporter will give you a few minutes of time or tell you to call back, e-mail the information, or send a fax.

If requested, give your pitch as succinctly as possible, and try to sell the story to the reporter. Why will he or she care what you have to say?

If the reporter shows an interest, be sure to provide the appropriate information and set an interview time as soon as possible.

It's also wise to have a "back-up" story angle to pitch if the reporter is not interested in your first news item.

4. Diary the Information.

Once you are finished with your call, be sure to make a note of your conversation in your own media database. Keep track of the media venue, reporter, date, and any other key notes.

If the reporter was not interested in your story, write down why and when you should follow-up.

By keeping notes of your media discussions, you'll be able to give better pitches in the future and create great press relationships.

5. Follow Up!

Many times, the reporters you contact will not have time to hear your story because they are on deadline. Do not get discouraged or take this as a permanent rejection.

Listen carefully to any directions the reporters give you and follow up accordingly. If you keep in contact with media members on a regular basis, eventually your patience will be rewarded.

As you pitch, know that you are giving reporters news about your business, experience and expertise. They may be interested in this information at the moment you call or remember you for a future assignment. It's up to you to make a good impression.