

Win Big Publicity Payoffs on a Shoestring Budget

5 cost-effective ways to increase awareness and sales for your business

As an entrepreneur, you can grow your business quickly and cost-effectively with public-relations efforts. The good news is that you don't need a lot of cash or a well-connected publicist to get the media coverage you desire. Instead, you can save a lot of money doing your own publicity. Here are five simple tips to help you get started:

1. Pursue top venues.

When you begin your publicity efforts, think big. While it's a good idea to start at the local level, don't stop there. If you dream of a feature story in *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, or being a guest on *Oprah*, go for it! Many top media-venues want unique stories from new entrepreneurs, and you may have just what they are looking for.

2. Pick up the phone.

Research pertinent media members online and develop an interesting story idea for each person on your list. Once you have your story-idea ready, simply call the reporter directly. Introduce yourself and give a succinct pitch. You may be surprised at the results. And even if you get rejected, you've started a beneficial media-relationship for future opportunities.

3. Provide media-friendly content.

Make it easy for reporters to get the information they need fast. Add a user-friendly newsroom including: a media kit, press releases, downloadable photos, bios, contact data, and other pertinent items to your website. To get an idea of what reporters want online, review competitor websites and those of successful businesses you admire. After all, if your competitors have this information posted and you don't, who will reporters be more likely to quote at deadline time.

4. Create partnerships.

Consider collaborating with a charity or well-known business on various events to gain important media exposure and credibility. You'll share contacts and costs while increasing results and dividing work efforts in half. And the best part is that you'll help the local community and meet potential, new customers in the process.

5. Network.

Get the word out about your business in person. Try to attend events and give presentations where you'll meet potential affiliates, customers and investors. Offer important information focusing on benefits rather than sales, and you'll build valuable relationships. Plus, you may be quoted by a media member in attendance.

You can significantly increase startup sales with do-it-yourself publicity. It just takes extra time and effort, but it is well worth it. In fact, by following these simple tips and sharing your personal passion and business insights directly with reporters, you may find that you get more media attention than you ever thought possible!