

## **Guerilla PR Tactics**

So you've started your own business and you're ready to let the world (or your neighborhood) know. Now it's time to add public relations to the list of your entrepreneurial skills. Understanding the function of public relations and what it comprises is an essential component of success.

Public relations are human relations and a critical aspect of growing your business. Everything you say and do is part of your PR campaign. It is the image you project everyday to everyone you meet. It is about you and your company becoming a force in the public eye on a regular basis. PR that you undertake yourself can be a primary way to grow your business and become known without major expense.

### **There are seven basic steps involved in mounting your campaign.**

**Step 1:** Involves figuring out who you are, what you do and how to express it in the most succinct and interesting way possible. There may be situations such as networking functions where you have only 30 seconds to introduce yourself and make that all important first impression. Spend as much time as necessary practicing your "intro" until it truly flows in a positive, strong and confident manner. If you look and feel confident about what you have to offer, it will be reflected in your handshake, eye contact and tone of voice (even over the telephone). Equally important is the quality and image of any materials you hand out, mail or refer people to, including your business card, brochure and website. Remember that success begets success and great first impressions will speak volumes about you and your business.

Now that you have developed the most effective message possible,

**Step 2:** Determine your ooh-ahh factor, the "story" about you, your product and/or your company that makes people go "ooh, ahh tell me more." It's important to understand why you are news from the media's perspective and how your products help people or your service gives value and benefit. Once you know your "ooh-ahh" factor, you can begin to create materials that will tailor your story to the specific media whose attention you wish to gain.

**Step 3:** Define your audience and create a media list. Your list will, of course, be determined by the nature of your product or service, whether you are a local, national or international company and on which markets you are focusing your growth. If you are a "local" trying to build a business in your community, then you will focus on local media. On the other hand, if you are pursuing national growth, you will want to check out major newspapers such as the Wall Street Journal, entrepreneurial publications such as Fortune or Inc. or gender-specific magazines such as Good Housekeeping or Men's Health. Another good source might be the trade or sales magazines for your profession or specialty. There are sources for purchasing media lists. It's important to familiarize yourself with all the media you contact and to make preliminary phone calls to get the appropriate name for directing your release or media kit. Do an update at least every three months. A local list could easily have 100 names and a national list 400 or more.

**Step 4:** It is time to put together a press release - a simple 3 to 4 paragraph one page document that tells your story clearly. It must be unique enough to grab media attention fast. The first paragraph must contain the catch phrase to grab them quickly. It should

contain the who, what, when, where, why and how of your story and begin with the city and state of origination. End the first paragraph with: "For Further Information, call..." Techniques for grabbing attention include giving a statistic that shows that their audience needs this information, which makes it relevant to current events or business news. The second paragraph might consist of a quick biography or additional information, and the third should contain a quote from the highest source you can find. It is always better to use someone else's words to praise yourself. Sometimes the press will use only the first paragraph, so it must contain all the relevant information.

The press release should be done on your letterhead. On the top left column, it should say "For Immediate Release." The upper right should show the contact information and give the name and phone number of your publicist (or yourself). Be absolutely sure it is 100 percent accurate in terms of grammar, facts, punctuation, spelling and names.

**Step 5:** Creating a media kit that will include a copy of your press release(s) as well as other information. This is used to create interest for the press to do a full story or invite you to appear on a TV or radio show. It is important to understand that each of these types of media have their own unique requirements for their particular audience. Obviously TV producers are interested in a visual hook, so you should include clear, easily reproducible pictures. Radio will be more interested in the verbal aspect of your story. Just as you worked on your short-term message at the beginning of your PR campaign, now you need to work on how best to exploit that image. How will you tell your story most effectively? It needs to be personal so an audience can identify with it and apply it to their own lives. It must also be interesting and provide value and benefit to the audience. It should also include a company background piece or brochure, a pricing sheet, any press clippings (reproduced on your stationary) and any other public relations materials.

Grabbing attention is imperative, so packaging is critical. It involves the careful selection of eye-catching colors for the folder, as well as the contents. Quality says a lot so don't skimp. Consider having the cover embossed or using a logo sticker. Select a folder with a business card insert and select easy to read, crisp clear text and quality paper.

**Step 6:** The all-important mail out. Presumably you have created your media list and have the appropriate names (with correct spelling) and titles. Now comes the most critical part, the follow up, the follow up and the follow up (yes, I meant to write it 3 times). The phone may not ring. It is up to you to make the calls. Start by saying, "Hello, my name is..." and start your pitch within 10 seconds. Remember your hook and tell them in 30 seconds or less why you are the news. A good rule of thumb on follow-up calls is within one week for national, within three to four days for local/regional or within a day or two for e-mail. You might want to create a one-page synopsis to use as a guide when you call, which should include who you are, why you are news and how your product or service benefits people and gives value.

**Step 7:** Seven reminders to help you create powerful publicity 365 days a year. If you follow these tips, you will be well on your way to capturing the media's attention.

- Make personal contacts as often as possible.
- Always carry your business card and materials.
- Know what is special about you and use the media to get the word out.

- Know the media you are pitching -- always watch or listen to a show before you are on it.
- Be prepared for interviews. They might just call you before you call them.
- Be consistent with your image and make sure all your materials reflect the image you desire to project.
- Participate in social and civic activities and help others get business by networking.

The success of your business is dependant on a number of factors. Remember – Even if you have developed the most intricate technologically advanced product, delivering instant ROI – if you don't get the message out properly, don't expect the orders to roll-in on their own.