



Top 10 Ways to Harness the Media's Power

"Story Idea: 50% Off U.S. Real Estate; Expert Explains Bargains for Foreign Investors."

"Let me know if you would like an advance copy and a chance to interview the author."

"Does this sound like a story that would interest your listeners? If so, just hit "reply" to book an interview."

These are the types of messages that inundate my email account every morning. Publicists representing experts, authors and consultants constantly implore me to schedule their clients on my radio show.

We book less than 10 percent of these guest experts, yet the persistent publicists keep pitching the same people over and over. Why? The publicists and their clients have so much at stake. They desperately need to win over radio hosts like me, because few things in the world are more effective in promoting a person than free news coverage, better known as "earned media."

The media are powerful. For relatively small effort and cost, you can reach a mass audience. Therefore, whether marketing yourself or your company, it makes sense to harness the media's power. To do that more effectively, consider the following tips:

1. Build relationships and establish rapport with journalists in your market area. Make sure they understand who you are and what interesting and newsworthy information you are qualified to provide.
2. Remember journalists are under pressure to fill space and time. Frequently pitch new material and offer to "localize" national or international stories that relate to your area of self marketing expertise. Look for excuses to be in the news.

3. Make journalists' lives easier by providing them with hard-to-find, fascinating information that other media outlets have not yet reported.
4. Be quick in returning calls or emails from the media. If you delay, they may grow impatient and interview your competitor instead of you.
5. Be very forgiving. Unless a journalist makes a mistake that humiliates you or damages your competitive standing, let it go when you are unhappy with his or her reporting. The only thing you accomplish when you complain to journalists is to guarantee they will never call you again.
6. Keep in mind that journalists have egos. If you get an interview, one of your primary jobs is to make the interviewer look good.
7. Assume that nothing is "off the record" unless you have a close friendship with the journalist.
8. Avoid clichés and don't use too much politically correct language.
9. Don't ramble on with lengthy answers. I recently interviewed a business leader who just released a new book. Her answer to my first question lasted six minutes. That's FOREVER in radio time.
10. Strike a balance – be professional but flash a little charisma.

Once you master these media relations tips, you're well on your way to harnessing the media's awesome power. That, in turn, will impress your clients and leave your competitors shaking their heads.

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