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## Gaining Exposure

**Publicity for your properties is easier than you think.**

by Peter Fretty



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Few businesses can afford to advertise as frequently as needed to gain enough exposure to cover the expense. But it is simply a matter of putting together the correct strategy to reach the market without paying for advertisements or outside help.

### Set the Stage

One of the most productive means of achieving free publicity is to obtain exposure in various media outlets. But first, define the company's ideal audience and demographic, which can help steer you to the correct media outlets. At a newspaper or a weekly or city business journal that could be the real estate reporter, explains Sandra Beckwith, Fairport, N.Y.-based author of *Streetwise Complete Publicity Plans: How to Create Publicity That Will Spark Media Exposure and Excitement*.

Ron Dresner, president of Farmington, Conn.-based Your PR Department LLC, adds that businesses need to consider all forms of media, including television and radio stations, Internet sites and magazines and newspapers that target the desired audience.

"This is when you know who to establish relationships with and how they like to receive material," Dresner says. "However, remember that it is important when you initiate contact with the media outlet that lightly selling yourself and the company, usually receives a more favorable response than a full court press, especially when establishing new relationships."

### Serve as a Resource

There are numerous ways to serve as a resource. "Send industry information you read in trade magazines that the reporter might not see, and provide ideas for articles that might not have anything to do with your business but will help the reporter," she says. "Also, put in writing for your media contacts what news or article topics you can comment on in an interview and tell them why you're a good source. Use a cover letter that explains your interest in being considered as a source for relevant articles, and attach to it a narrative bio that details your industry experience."

However, business owners need to realize that this means being available for editors and reporters when they need someone to quote. "Journalists need to know, in a very easy manner, how to reach you because most of the time they are working on deadline," Dresner says. Beckwith agrees adding that when journalist leave messages it is important to return calls promptly. "If you don't, they may interview your competitor instead," she says.

Also, by serving as a resource when things are going well, businesses will have much more pull in positive media coverage, if and when things start to slow. "Do not wait until you're desperate to get exposure. You have to drive the campaign before you need it," Dresner says.

### Send Out Press Releases

Most people don't know when they should send out a press release, says Scott Lorenz, president of Plymouth, Mich.-based public relations firm Westwind Communications. "Material should be newsworthy and useful to the reader. The key is not to be a waste of time for the media," he says. "A press release can be used to announce information to the public, your investors, the media, your customers and even your competitors about you and your activities."

Press releases are the perfect means of shaping a business' corporate story, Dresner says. "Whether it's a new management hire or a new contract, take the opportunity to write a professional press release and let the appropriate journalists know about it in a timely fashion," he says.

### Some Topics Worthy of a Press Release

- Announce a new product or service.
- Report a new study of your own and your analysis or forecast.
- Tie into a controversy within your industry by commenting on it.
- Comment on a national survey or study to your benefit.
- Spend time volunteering in the community or donating to charity.
- Introduce new or expanding tenants.
- Inform about internal promotion of key staff members.
- Report on a public project and offer insight to the problem.
- Suggest an open house where people can tour your facilities.
- Announce a fact-finding trip and then report the results.
- Announce a company-sponsored scholarship.