

Marketing Your Product or Service

6 Ways to Get Your Small Business Covered Positively in the News

Positive media coverage is a boon for a small-business advertising budget. But getting your name out there is tough, especially if you don't have a media background. There's a lot more to it than blasting out a press release every month. We've assembled a list of five insider tips to help you break through with reporters and get your business noticed..



1. Befriend reporters.

Use your sales skills on members of the media, but exercise caution. Make friends with local or industry-specific journalists, and connect with them on Facebook, Twitter or email. But don't pitch a story idea to them until after you've known them months—not minutes. Comment on articles they write when you're genuinely interested. Suggest sources or make connections that have nothing to do with your business. Stories pitched after you've established a connection have a much better chance of being considered.

2. Narrow your focus.

It doesn't hurt to shoot for the stars—there's a chance "The Today Show" will feature your newest product. But targeting smaller, local or more industry-specific news media outlets gives you a more realistic opportunity to be noticed. Here's a tip: Smaller publications or blogs generally have only one or two in-house writers and will welcome guest columns, or at least consider well-thought-out ideas.

3. Say yes. Business owners are busy people—but so are journalists. If a reporter contacts you for interview, say yes on the spot and agree to speak with him the same day—even if you're traveling, on vacation or working under a huge deadline. In most cases, reporters need a quote now, and they'll move along if you're too busy to talk.

4. Know real news. This tip applies when you're suggesting ideas yourself, and it's an important one. For your pitches to be taken seriously, you have to understand what news is—and isn't. A standard press release about a new product or service you're unveiling won't get noticed as much as a story idea about how your product or service can help people solve a problem. Reporters love real people, so include customer testimonials and use their names. It also helps to include high-quality photos of people using whatever you're selling.

5. Be concise. Boil down your pitches to a few sentences or a short paragraph—no one will read much more. Learn how to write, or find out if anyone on your staff is good with words. Bad writing won't win you any coverage.

6. Be a good storyteller. Facts and figures and bullet points about how great you are your company are is not what good stories are made of. A good story about a problem you solved or an innovation that you developed is what editors are looking for and that readers enjoy.