

10 Steps to a Successful PR Campaign

A Do-it-Yourself Media Relations Guide for Authors

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Your Book is written. You have your press release.

...Now What?

Step 1 – Make sure you have a newsworthy angle in your press release other than “local author publishes book”

- Is there a hot issue or trend to connect with your book?
 - o Political, environmental, economic, social, gender, generational, geographic (regional, national or global)

- Is there an historical anniversary or a special holiday that is coming up that has any relation to your book?
 - o Valentine’s Day, a national holiday, a religious holiday, Mother’s/Father’s Day, anniversary of the invention of the printing press, the discovery of King Tut’s tomb, the anniversary of the Wright Brothers inventing flight (you get the idea).

- Is there a high profile event that can dovetail with your book launch?
 - o An annual book fair, literacy month, Mardi Gras, a Shakespeare Festival, Carnival, October Fest.

- Does your book address a sensitive issue that sparks controversy?

- Do you have an area of expertise that you can address when the media wants to interview you? (other than being an author)

- Is there a local organization you can partner with or cross promote with that has a common theme or mission?

Step 2 – Develop your media kit and have it available for download on your book’s website

- When you’ve succeeded in piquing the media’s interest they’ll have more questions than just, “what’s your book about?” Be ready with some interesting background information. Your kit should include:
 - press release
 - your biography
 - photos (at least a headshot of you)
 - book trailers
 - character bios (for fiction)
 - FAQs - questions and answers to a few questions you’d like them to ask, i.e. How did you get the idea for your book? For fiction - Who is your main character based on? For non-fiction – “Where did you develop your expertise in the subject area?”
 - links to any related sites or blogs
 - a DVD of your 1 minute promo (could be incorporated into a TV interview or on the online edition of a newspaper)
 - Bring a copy of the press kit with you to all interviews

Step 3 – Formulate your media list

- use a database or Excel spreadsheet for ease of use
- The bulk of your list should be media in your local community. Start with a regionalised media guide or your local yellow pages (online or hard copy) or just Google “print and broadcast media in (name of your city, country or region).”
- Make a list including:
 - local daily newspaper/s (in a big city there may be more than one)
 - community newspapers (could be weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly)
 - monthly magazines (business, lifestyle or trade if you have written about a certain industry – whether fiction or non-fiction)
 - local radio stations (focus on the ones that are a talk format, especially morning drive shows or those that have regular news updates).
 - online pod casts (some focus on author interviews such as <http://www.eyeonbooks.com>)
 - Blogs that do book reviews or focus specifically on your subject matter
 - local cable television stations
 - local network affiliates (that produce local community programs)
- If you have a really great story or unique pitch, include some national media as well (network morning shows, national magazines, etc.) with a targeted pitch formulated for each one.
- Register with HARO – www.helpareporter.com – scan regularly for reporters who do author interviews or are writing about your area of expertise or any issues you address in your book.

Step 4 – Identify the opportunities for interviews. What are the programs?

- Watch and listen to local TV and radio stations to identify opportunities. The more specific your media list is the better results you'll have.
- Take note of the shows that do local interviews and who is conducting the interviews/hosting the shows.
- What types of stories/issues do they normally cover?
- Who do they typically have as guests?
- What are the latest trends for which you can offer a fresh angle?
- Watch the bylines in the newspaper to see which reporters are writing stories on the industries covered in your book or if there are any doing book reviews.
- Is there an opportunity to write a guest column (you are a writer, remember)? Check out the op-ed pages of the newspaper and see if they have regular guest columns and write one that highlights the issues addressed in your book.

Step 5 – Identify the right contact people. Who are the decision-makers for what gets in the news?

- Contact each media outlet to get the names of the right people to send your release to and the appropriate email address. There could be more than one at each outlet. Ask for the names of the following individuals:

- Print media
 - Editor
 - Deputy editor
 - Community editor
 - Lifestyle editor
 - Reporter who does book reviews (not very common these days but doesn't hurt to ask) or writes on an industry related to your book

- Broadcast media
 - News director
 - Program director
 - Producer (of a particular show you've identified)
 - Presenter/host (sometimes they produce their own show and select their own guests)

- Don't forget non-traditional media
 - College newspapers and radio
 - Newsletters and bulletins of local Chambers of Commerce or business groups (or any other group you belong to like Rotary perhaps)

Step 6 – The Pitch – What do you say when you call?

- Develop your pitch in advance. What's the news hook? Why would their readers/listeners be interested?
- The pitch can certainly start with your name and that you've just published a book but quickly note what makes you/your book unique (the news hook).
- Give your pitch in 10 seconds or less then pause for reaction or encouragement to continue.
- Don't call on deadline. For newspapers don't call anytime after 4 p.m. For radio never call just before the top of the hour and for television never just before the noon, 5 p.m. or late night news (or whatever time the local station does its live news updates, which you'll know from your research).
- Remember to highlight what it is that makes you an expert.
- Make sure you practice your pitch before you pick up the phone.
- It's a good idea to send an email in advance with a note that you'll be following up with a phone call (note a specific day and time)
- If you're going national, identify a timeframe during which you'll be available for interviews (if they want you to be in studio live). This can be costly if you don't live in the same town so keep in mind: you will have to cover your own expenses. Only do it if it is going to be worth your while or you're going to be in town anyways. Or, if there's a local affiliate, it could get picked up nationally if the story warrants it.

Step 7 – Scheduling interviews

- When you succeed in pitching your story, it's time to prepare for the interview.
- Be flexible and available. Reporters and producers are busy and are always on deadline so don't miss an opportunity because it's happening fast. Just make sure you've prepared well in advance of making that phone call.
- You'll know the nature of the interview because you've pitched the angle and sent the press release. However, ask the reporter/editor/producer if there's anything you can prepare in advance or if it would be possible for them to send you a list of questions. Ask this question gently. Many interviewers prefer to have you "fresh" and not practiced but there are those who will happily send you some possible questions to put you at ease. If they say no, don't panic, just prepare as best you can.
- If it's a print interview choose a location that's comfortable for you (even your home if that suits you) but preferably not a loud public place.
- If it's a radio interview and they give you a choice between coming to the studio or doing it by phone, ALWAYS go to the studio. You'll have a better experience. You'll be more natural and engaging if you can see the interviewer face-to-face. Not to mention the technical problems that can arise from a remote interview, especially with mobile phones.
- For a broadcast interview, ask if it will be live or taped and how long the process will take. Be prepared to spend a couple of hours, especially if it's a taped interview and there are several guests.

Step 8 –Preparing for the interview

- Outline the top 3 key messages that you want to get across.
- Don't forget to include your website or wherever else your book can be purchased.
- Do a little research on the reporter. What have they written before? Are their articles balanced?
- For television does the presenter/host have a friendly approach or is it more businesslike?
- Put together a list of potential questions and formulate your answers ahead of time. But try not to sound rehearsed or robotic.
- Doing media interviews can be nerve-wracking at the best of times. Just remember, the more you do it the better you'll get.
- And relax! No one knows you and your book better than you do.
- If you haven't done it before, practice with friends and practice your key messages.
- Of course, you'll have sent a copy of your book to the reporter or producer after the interview was scheduled but don't forget to bring several signed copies with you for broadcast interviews. One for the interviewer and a couple to give away to viewers/listeners.

AND...PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Step 9 – Doing the Interview

- If you're doing a television interview don't wear stripes or really busy patterns
- Make sure you arrive plenty early so you can get used to your surroundings and get comfortable.
- Remember your key messages. If you're ever stuck for an answer or the question is irrelevant to your book, bring the interview back to one of your key messages. Use bridges such as:
 - o What I'd really love to talk about is...
 - o What the book is really about is...
 - o I'm not sure that's relevant but the reason I'm so passionate about this subject matter is because...
- Mention your website at least a couple of times (without being obnoxious).
- For print interviews make sure your answers are short and sweet so you don't get mis-quoted or taken out of context. It's known in the business as talking in "sound bites." Don't give too much background. That's what the press kit is for. The same goes for the shorter (5-10 minute) radio or television interviews. Use stories, anecdotes and analogies whenever possible.
- If you're doing a full-blown, half-hour talk show (radio or television) then you have the luxury of going into a little more detail but make sure you don't drone on or you'll lose the audience.
- Remember, NOTHING is off the record. As soon as you are in the presence of the reporter the interview has begun.

Step 10 – Follow up and tracking

- Don't forget to send a thank-you email after the interview and for print media say that you're available if they need to verify any information or need additional background.
- Send a signed copy of your book as a thank you to anyone who helped during the process (editorial assistant, assistant producer, a researcher).
- After a print interview ask when the story is going to run, watch for it and clip it.
- If you've done interviews with national media you might want to hire a monitoring company to watch for you and provide clips (both print and broadcast).
- Review the results and evaluate your performance. Ask the following questions:
 - o Did you communicate your key messages?
 - o Were you able to give any website or contact information?
(basically, letting people know how they can get a copy of the book)
 - o Did you speak slowly and clearly?
- Post your clips (both print and broadcast) on your book website as well as your FaceBook personal and fan pages (or any other social media).
- Anytime you get coverage send a message on Twitter.

In summary: Make sure you take advantage of all opportunities to cross-promote your PR success on all platforms!