

Tips for Getting Free PR

Not every marketing effort has to break the bank - but it helps to have some tips on how to use PR to your advantage...

'Piggybacking' simply means putting a fresh or different twist on something that's already in the news. You might have you seen a story on the Today Show that reflects something that's happening in your industry. Call the station that airs the Today Show and offer a 'local angle.' They'll probably interview you as part of the story.

You can piggyback on news items, trends, holidays, or community events - the possibilities never end.

Trends and new ideas and technologies make for good stories. Is your firm podcasting or using new technologies or social trends to gain PR? What about those young associates who have utube videos of their guitar hero abilities? Put them to work for your company and sponsor their efforts. Getting a unique "In" with a young and fresh market is a great way to get listed in TV or Radio stories covering a new trend or technology.

Create and distribute a directory if you're part of a large company or organization (university, non-profit, etc) and you've got a lot of people who are qualified to comment on a wide variety of topics,

It can be elaborate or simple - as long as your media contacts can find a suitable expert quickly. Include names, titles, and contact numbers (day and evening) and post your list on your web site.

Polls, surveys, tip sheets, and quizzes make great fillers. Your data doesn't need to be scientific or statistically significant, just interesting. Unique contests, such as Thrifty Rent-a-Car's annual Honeymoon Disasters Contest, can generate tons of coverage.

The media love controversy and (despite frequent accusations to the contrary) most go out of their way to present both sides of a story. If you can offer a contrarian point of view --and you can explain your case--reporters will often give you an opportunity

You can get the media's attention to publicize upcoming events: classes, open houses, free demonstrations, visits by celebrities. Publicity before the event helps spark interest and boost attendance.

Human-interest stories are everywhere, including your business. Think about people in your company, group, or organization. Does someone have an intriguing hobby? Pitch their story to the local media.

Even the weather and climate can give you a hook for free publicity. Homebuilders and remodelers can offer tips about saving energy. Doctors can suggest tips avoiding colds and flu during the winter. Attorneys can give expert opinions on cases in the press. Become a know expert in your field and get to know your local media contacts.

TV stations and cable channels, radio stations, newspapers, magazines, trade publications, and newsletters - both print and electronic - have huge amounts of time and space to fill.

There are more opportunities than ever, and competition is fierce for advertising dollars, viewers and subscribers. The secret to success knowing exactly what they're looking for - and giving it to them with a local twist.