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Publicity and Marketing

There is a fine line between marketing and publicity, but keep in mind that they are two different things. They should work hand in hand. Marketing considerations include such things as the price of your product, and its title or name, and how to distribute it. Marketing should begin long before the book or product reaches the hands of the public. Publicity is the process of letting people know that you're marketing something. Publicist Suzi Prokell lists the practical steps you can take to publicize your project.

How to Publicize Your Book

By Suzi Prokell

Now that you have your book published, how can you make sure it sells? Publicity is a crucial element for success. Without it, the public has no way of knowing about your work, and the book will simply sit on bookstore shelves with all the others. Publicity is a tool to reel in readers and convince them to buy your book.

A huge misconception about publicity campaigns is their timing. Most authors wait until they have their books completed and printed before thinking about publicity. Unfortunately, by this time, it's too late. Because of production schedules, magazines have a lead time of three to six months. This means that editors need to know of your book three to six months before it is available in bookstores. Editors like to provide their readers with timely information and most will only run book reviews the same month a book is released. After that, the book is considered old news.

The First Step

The first step to a publicity campaign is to determine your target audience. Who is most likely to be interested in your book's subject matter? Once you answer this question, you can begin to research and compile media lists. Media lists should include every print and broadcast media outlet you feel might be interested in reviewing your book, as well as all local media contacts in your hometown. Working the hometown media is a great way to jump-start publicity for your book and determine what pitch sells your book to an editor before approaching national media.

Media lists should include as many different editors at each appropriate media outlet as possible. For example, if you have a book on nutrition, you might contact the book review editor as well as the health, food, and lifestyles editors. This increases your odds of getting coverage in that outlet. A great resource for media lists is the *Bacon's Media Directory*. This is a four-book directory that includes every radio show, television show, magazine, and newspaper in the U.S. and Canada. It's also available on CD-ROM so you can compile your own lists and print labels. However, it's expensive and may not be something you wish to purchase if you have just one book to promote. In this case, you might want to purchase specific media lists from Bacon's by calling 1-800-621-0561.

Once you have a media list, you need to write a news release about your book. Generally, this should be no longer than two pages and include a brief overview as well as anything interesting about the book's subject matter or author. You should also include the book's ISBN number, price, release date, and number of pages. The press release should include a contact name and phone number at the top and should be double-spaced. It's very important to include the vital information in the first paragraph—including the book's title and release date—as most editors make a decision on their interest after reading the first two paragraphs. Most do not read a press release in its entirety so it's important to grab their attention in the first few sentences.

own—invest in a good database book and software that will grow with your company. Some good resources:

- Harvey Mackay's "Mackay 66" list of customer information—see *Swim with the Sharks Without Getting Eaten Alive*, p. 45–53
- *eMarketing* by Seth Rodin
- *Direct Magazine*, phone (203) 358-9900
- The Cowles Report on Database Marketing (800) 775-3777
- *Database Marketing* by Edward Nash
- The Direct Marketing Association, based in New York, with chapters nationwide.

Know your customer(s).

Analyze your sales records and segment your customers by lifetime sales value if at all possible. At a minimum, know your different customers' demographics and buying habits so that you can customize promotions to meet their needs.

Integrate direct mail with other marketing methods.

Be there for your customers with information and service through as many channels of communication as possible. Don't rely on direct mail alone to carry your messages; supplement it with paid advertising, public relations, newsletters, and other efforts.

Ask the right questions.

As you collect information for your customer database, be sure you are asking the right questions to gather information you can act on. Nobody likes to waste time in today's hurry-up world.

Don't cut corners on any component of your direct mailing.

Invest in a good mailing list if you don't already have one. There are a variety of sources for mailing lists—check your Yellow Pages or call the local chapter of the American Marketing Association. Develop several strong incentives for each type of customer. Finish the sale with strong copy, headlines, and graphics.

Take the time to test your offer.

Before you send out 10,000 pieces, send a test group of 1,000. If you don't get a one- to five-percent response, pull the offer and try another one. You should also consider testing a variety of offers to each audience segment.

Track your responses and keep a regular mailing schedule.

This is easy to put off—but don't! Hire someone to manage your customer database if necessary. You can hire a freelancer for a lot less than the cost of missed opportunities.

Direct Mail “Trade Secrets”

- Merge/purge names. Names that appear on two or more lists can be made into a list that almost always outperforms any single list from which these names were drawn. (In other words, people who appear on multiple mailing lists are excellent targets.)
- Overlays (also called “enhancements”) on purchased lists, such as lifestyle characteristics, income, education, propensity to respond to direct mail offers, will greatly improve response.
- Offers that ask for a “Yes or No” response get more orders than those that don't.
- A time limit on your offer will improve response.
- Free gifts outperform discount offers.
- Self-mailers are less expensive to produce, but envelope mailings draw more response.
- The longer you can keep prospects reading your letter, the more likely it is that they will respond. (So that's why direct mailings have so many pieces inside!)
- Credit-card acceptance and a toll-free number are a must for consumer orders.