



MORE
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Local PR Advice Guide

Local and regional print and broadcast media (newspapers, magazines and regional radio and television) can help you to promote your products and services, and raise the profile and credibility of your business – all for free!

However, so many small businesses fail to exploit the enormous potential of editorial coverage because they're not sure how to go about it. So here are some top tips to get local media coverage.

When you advertise in a publication you control what's said about your company and its products/services providing it's basically Legal, Decent, Honest and Truthful. But even if you advertise with a publication that won't guarantee your editorial will be accepted.

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With all editorial you are in the hands of the editor/journalist so to secure good editorial coverage it's worth considering a few pointers to help maximise your media coverage:

1. Build good media relationships. Get to know your local editors/journalists/programme planners and what they're looking for. Don't pester them with 'commercial' angles but cultivate a relationship of trust so they get used to your submissions being relevant for publication. To win the hearts and minds of the public through editorial it helps to build a good working relationship with key journalists by giving them credible material and by responding to their requests promptly because they work to deadlines.

2. Making your news newsworthy. Your news story must contain 'news'! Sounds obvious – but out of the hundreds of press releases a news editor can receive every day the vast majority are rejected. Reasons for rejection include product-led stories best suited to advertising and badly written or constructed releases where the message is lost.

To secure valuable editorial coverage you have to present a news story that has genuine news-value. It needn't be a front page tabloid scoop but it must contain information of genuine interest to both the editor and the reader/listener.

Good examples of this are positive business stories (expansion/investment, strategic alliances, events/significant achievements/anniversaries), (human interest/personnel news such as employee achievements, senior appointments), market trends/innovations.

3. Key elements of an effective press release.

A news editor is more likely to use a press release that follows these basic guidelines:

- Restrict it to 6-to-8 tight paragraphs, approx 250-300 words.
- Make sure it covers the What, Who, Where, When and How aspects of what you are aiming to communicate.
- Start with a headline that gets the message across. Don't waste time on 'snappy' headlines, leave that to the journalist.
- To hook a busy editor, the 'story' should be in the first paragraph.
- Keep the language factual, no extravagant advertising-type claims.
- Add an Editor's Note at the end with a brief company biography.

- Add your contact details for any follow-up questions.
- Attach an interesting photograph where possible – a good ‘press shot’ will often get more prominence. Make sure it’s accurately captioned.
- Most journalists prefer editorial submitted by email – but as emails can get ‘lost’ a quick follow-up phone call can be useful.

4. Editorial opportunities beyond the press release.

Case study: Editorial showing how your company helped a customer/solved a problem others can identify with has great credibility. Case studies can generate invaluable and influential exposure – so they are definitely worth pursuing.

Scheduled features: Most regional magazines and newspaper supplements work to advance content schedules, e.g. Lifestyle/Home improvement/Kitchen & Bathroom features. Make sure your submitted material focuses on market or design trends and product innovations rather than overt product ‘plugs’.

Media comment: If someone in your business has excellent market knowledge put them forward as a spokesperson a journalist can come to for informed comment on market, design or product trends.

Photo-opportunities/stunts: Invite the local press along if you are having an event at the showroom and think about ways to create a photo-opportunity such as the ‘1000th customer through the door’ who wins a prize.

5. Maintain an accurate up-to-date mailing list. Your mailing list becomes an essential tool to ensure your editorial submissions go to the right people to maximise coverage. Make sure you keep it accurately updated because we all hate being incorrectly targeted.

Local radio. As with print journalists, radio has possibilities for a spokesperson to contribute to programmes covering relevant lifestyle topics. Get in touch and check out the opportunities.

Regional television. If your company has significant news regarding increasing employment, expansion, employee achievements, involvement in something charitable or topical – it’s worth contacting them.