

Seven Public Relations Secrets that Boost Your Speaking Career

By Pam Lontos

Publicity can come from anywhere, and in many different forms. It can be as simple as having a letter published in the editorial column of your local paper, or as dynamic as having a front-page article with your name splashed across the headlines. But a successful publicity campaign is harder than you may think. It takes huge effort on your part to get your business noticed by the media.

So why bother? Is publicity really that important? Yes, yes... a thousand times, yes! The effectiveness of your publicity campaign will ultimately determine the success of your speaking career. Publicity increases your exposure without the outrageous cost of advertising. It adds credibility to your message and develops name recognition in your field. Essentially, publicity makes you stand out, above all the other speakers, to the meeting planners and business leaders.

Now you don't have to be a public relations expert to maximize the results of your publicity campaign. Use the following trade secrets to increase your visibility and book more speaking engagements:

1. Get to Know Your Audience

According to a survey conducted by Jericho Communications, the typical Fortune 1000 CEO is more likely to have watched *The Simpsons* than to have watched all three presidential debates. So what does this mean for your publicity? Simple, it means that you can't make assumptions about your audience.

Understanding your audience and what appeals to them is important if you want to get noticed. Keep in mind that you have a variety of different tastes that go beyond your work, and so does everyone else. Figure out what magazines your audience reads and what shows they watch, then you read and watch the same things.

2. Create News

By familiarizing yourself with popular publications within your audience, you should gain an understanding of what issues are important to them and what interests them. Understand what they find newsworthy, and develop your publicity around these issues. Tie your topic to current events and target your audience directly when you pitch stories.

For example, if your keynote focuses on home organization, you can reach a business audience for "Clean Off Your Desk Day." Or if you help businesses implement time management strategies in the workplace, you can reach an at-home

audience with an article on how to tackle the home improvements you started, but never completed. Don't be afraid to stretch the boundaries of your topic. And remember, create news that interests your audience, not that interests you.

3. Send Press Releases

Press releases are the easiest and quickest ways to advertise to a large audience, and they inform the media that you have something to offer. Press releases are also a good method for getting your speeches reviewed in publications. Watch the breaking news and if something ties to your topic, send a press release to the newspapers, radio and television shows, and magazines offering your take as an expert to interview about the situation.

Give your press releases a professional look by using a letterhead. Keep them short (two pages maximum), and double space if possible. Direct it to a specific reporter or editor to make sure it doesn't get lost in the stacks, and always use a slant aimed at the publication's or show's audience. And perhaps most important, don't forget your contact information.

4. Develop a Winning Media Kit

As you approach the different media outlets, you'll need to send them a media kit. Think of your media kit as your resume; it tells the media professionals about you and your business. A professional media kit should include your short bio, your one sheet, and your contact information. Also include sample questions about your topic that the writer or host can use during the interview. Put all this information together in a professional folder, and present it to media professionals before interviews.

5. Solve Your Contact's Problems

When it comes to stories, each reporter and producer has a unique personality and unique needs. If you can figure out what they want, you make their job much easier. And when you make a media professional's job easier, they will come back to you for more quotes and more interviews. So ask them what other stories they're working on, and for what other publications they write. Ask how you can help them and what other topics they'd like to see. Let the reporter, editor, or producer know that you care about their stories and their audience because in the end, you'll both look good.

Establish working relationships with media professionals and develop a strong contact for increased publicity. Learn everything you can about the show or publication, and about their competition, so you can really make them shine.

6. Give a Great Interview

Do you know what it's like to talk to a boring person? They drone on for hours about topics that don't interest you and all you can think about is getting rid of them. Keep this in mind when you talk to the media, because if you're boring, they won't want to talk with you ever again. But if you have energy and keep your responses on the topic, you'll keep the media professionals interested.

Before the interview, take time to prepare three to five main points you'd like to cover. Then if the conversation goes astray, you can revert back to these points with ease. Also, don't be pushy about what you want. They may or may not have room in their story to mention your speaking topics. But if you ask nicely, you'll have a better chance of getting them mentioned.

7. Follow-up

Once you've established contact with media professionals, maintain the relationships and follow-up for more exposure. Avoid nagging with "did you decide yet" calls, but do ask when the article will be published or when the show will air. Maybe you can offer a new bit of information in your follow-up call. And remember to reintroduce yourself, because reporters and producers talk to many different people every day.

Another important aspect of follow-up and common courtesy is a thank you note. These added touches of consideration let the media professionals know that you appreciate them and make them want to work with you again in the future.

Use the Public Relations Secrets to Success

A successful publicity campaign is hard work, but it doesn't have to be excruciating. When you understand your readers and their interests, then target the publications and shows with a slant directed to the needs of their audience, you position yourself for maximum exposure. By using a professional approach and media kit, the media will take notice. Develop strong working relationships with media professionals, and you will get more quotes and interviews. Give a great interview, then follow-up with the reporter or producer to show your enthusiasm.

Publicity is the key to filling up your engagement calendar. Now you don't have to be a public relations pro to make the most of your media exposure. With these seven secrets, you can maximize your public relations success and start filling up your schedule with speaking engagements.