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ScrapBook

premier

sept/oct 2006
vol. 6 Issue 5

trade magazine

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Grassroots Marketing: Using Press Releases to Promote Your Scrapbooking Business

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Originally published in *Scrapbook Premier* magazine, Sept/Oct 2006

According to Wikipedia.org, "a news release, press release or press statement is a written or recorded communication directed at members of the news media for the purpose of announcing something claimed as having news value...a news release is designed to be sent to journalists in order to encourage them to develop articles on the subject."

Press releases are an under-used means to free publicity for your scrapbooking business. They are also often misused. There are definitely right ways and wrong ways to use these tools to promote your message.

The Wrong Way

The problem with most press releases is that they aren't written with specific media in mind. A local monthly parenting magazine has a vastly different audience than the Metropolitan section of your daily newspaper. As such, the writers for each publication will be interested in different news items, or they will be interested in different angles on the same item. You cannot effectively "pitch" both media outlets with the same press release. You must consider each media's audience, and what each publication typically writes about in order to craft an effective press release. If you send a release that is off-target of the media's audience or off-topic as to what they usually cover, you're wasting your time, and theirs. That's an easy way to get "blacklisted", or ensure they won't write about your business.

Another faux pas business owners make is to email the release as an attachment, often a .doc file or PDF. Most reporters will not even open an attached file if they are not expecting it. It's better to call the writer directly, present your topic, see if they're interested, and then follow up with an email with the "requested material". At the same time, verify how the reporter would like to receive future press releases: by phone, fax, email, or snail mail.

A mistake people often make is to send out one press release, and then when it doesn't garner any response, they don't send out any more. Most often, it takes more than one release to attract the media's attention. You need to put yourself in front of the media regularly to establish a relationship, as well as positioning yourself as a resource for articles. It's best to set up a fairly regular schedule for submitting press releases; once a month or every couple of months is a good target.

The Right Way

The best way to approach a press release is to "begin with the end in mind". Consider first how the media might use your press release to write an article. Most often, they don't want to write an article about just your business; they want to write about a topic, a

trend, or a current event. You can submit a press release that will help give them information about a topic or a trend, and then lead them back to you as an informational resource. Basically, help them do their job, and you're a step closer to some free publicity.

Here's an outline for a potential informational press release:

- Open with statistics about the hobby of scrapbooking (this establishes an audience)
- Mention a current "hot trend" within the hobby, such as home décor projects (this will establish timeliness, and broaden the reading audience beyond scrapbooking)
- Included a quote from someone in your company (this establishes the idea that you are an "expert resource" on this topic)
- Offer tips on how to do something, or suggest solutions to a problem experienced by the reading audience. Including tips in a press release is a great way to make it more newsworthy; you're essentially doing part of the reporter's job for them.
- Describe your company's mission/purpose, and provide a URL for more information about your company
- Provide URLs to projects posted online to help a media person get a better idea of how the information could be approached in an article. Visuals are always good in print media.

Your first step is to brainstorm a newsy topic. Often, this is easy – you're having a Grand Opening; you're launching a new product line; or you've added a "big name" to your design team. Other times you may be hard pressed to think of a topic. That's when it's good to turn to untraditional holidays, study results, or census trivia. For instance, March is Get Organized Month. Why not submit a press release offering tips on how to organize years' of photos and memorabilia? To make use of census statistics, submit a press release offering statistics on how many single mothers there are in America, and then follow up with tips on how these time-starved women can fit scrapbooking into their schedules. Or offer statistics on how many teachers there are in the state, coupled with news about recent district budget cuts, and mention that you offer a special year-round discount on supplies bought for the classroom.

Read press releases to get a feel for format, content, and news angles. Thousands of examples are available (and searchable) online at PRWeb.com. Another benefit offered by PRWeb.com – you can submit your press release for free distribution to media outlets across the country. For a modest fee, you can guarantee the release will be indexed by Google and Yahoo! News.

Get those wheels turning -- how can your press release help the media do their job, in a way that also promotes your scrapbooking business?

Resources to Check Out:

- <http://www.PRWeb.com>
- Search PRWeb for releases related to scrapbooking: <http://newspad.prweb.com/>
- Non-traditional Holidays: <http://www.butlerwebs.com/holidays/>
- Census Statistics: <http://www.census.gov/>
- American Fact Finder: factfinder.census.gov

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