



5 SECRETS to building LOCAL PR BUZZ



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If you're a small business, often the best opportunities to build awareness about your product or service is through the local media.

For one, getting on your local paper's radar is a lot easier than trying to get Oprah on the phone. Plus, your city or town is probably where your first – and most loyal – customers are. (In other words, you've got people who can do a lot of the talking for you.) And as a local business, you're a lot more relevant in the eyes of the press than your out-of-town competitors.

And here's a little PR secret: Many times, being known and talked about in the community can filter up and catch the attention of the big media guys – after all, you've already established some street cred.

Here are five secrets to generating some homegrown publicity for your business:

1 Partner Up

There's a reason why even huge brands like Levi's and Target help out organizations and charities on a regional level – everybody loves a “feel good story,” and the local media gobble it up. Do something that helps an existing organization or non-profit that has some built-in caché, like the regional Habitat for Humanity or Boys & Girls Club. Usually, these organizations will offer up their PR resources to help you get the word out, too.





2 Be the Local Face of a National Story

Scan the national headlines regularly to see if there's anything you can attach your business or expertise to. Regional journalists are always looking for local angles on big stories that are being talked about all over the country. Gold prices skyrocketing? If you own a jewelry store, share how it's affecting your business. Hurricane season in your part of the country? If you're a local insurance rep, offer up tips on what homeowners should do to prepare.

3 Do Something a Little Wild

Creative stunts are always in the back pockets of PR pros. Whether it's breaking a long-held record or setting up a snow machine in the middle of downtown on a summer day, the best stunts are interactive, fun and visually hard to miss (which makes for great video, photo and sound bite opportunities for media). Just make sure that your stunt is relevant to your business and preserves the message and image you're hoping to convey. If you're a hardware store, baking a 50-pound pepperoni pie will probably just confuse people but, if you own the local pizzeria, it makes much more sense. (And if you can sell slices and donate earnings to a charity – see tip No. 1 – that's an even better story!)

creative
& wild
PR
stunts



4 Celebrate Being Local

It's hard to miss the current movement urging people to buy from local businesses and spend their dollars in their own communities. Is there an organization in your city dedicated to supporting neighborhood businesses? If not, leading the effort is a great way to get people talking about you – and the media's attention. A few idea starters:

- **Reach Out:** Reach out to the local Chamber of Commerce and other businesses, and get them involved.
- **Branding:** Brand the campaign or effort with a name and logo.
- **Connect with Neighboring Businesses:** Create an email campaign and share it with neighboring businesses for them to send out highlighting all of your offers to draw more people to your area.
- **Create Buzz:** Spread the word online and offline. Set up a Facebook group, mail postcards to residents, and distribute decals with the effort's name and logo to local business owners so they can display them in their store windows.
- **Create a Local Event:** Coordinate a "walk" where businesses in town offer shoppers special promotions for one night only, or for a limited time. Ask the local school band to provide music. Local press love covering these types of events, especially if there's a lot of activity around for them to shoot. Just make sure you're the spokesperson for the event!

5 Get to Know Your Local Media and Bloggers

Believe it or not, reporters are people, too; get to know them and you'll increase your chances of coverage. Track who's reporting on what. Don't forget your local bloggers; they're usually easier to approach, and traditional journalists often follow blogs for potential stories. Many of these folks are active on social media, so if you are, too, re-tweet and comment on their posts once in a while so that they become familiar with your name, your company and your area of expertise.



So there you have it; time to turn on that publicity machine!