



Free Publicity Focus Group

Performance Based Marketing and Publicity

The Most Powerful Marketing Tool Ever Created

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Free Publicity Focus Group
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Someone once defined 'marketing' using the following analogy:

If the circus is coming to town and you paint a sign that says 'Circus Coming To Town', that's *advertising*.

If you hang the sign on an elephant and parade the elephant through town, that's *promotion*.

If the elephant walks through the mayor's flowerbed and destroys it, that's *publicity*.

If you can get the mayor to laugh about this, that's *public relations*.

If you stand outside the tent with a megaphone and tell the townspeople what a great time they will have at the circus, causing them to enter the tent and spend lots of money, that's *sales*.

And if YOU planned the whole thing IN ADVANCE, that's *marketing!*
-unknown-

A silly example, but it makes a good point. In the 'old days' of marketing, each of these fields was considered to be a specialty. Not so now, as the lines have blurred and 'self-marketing' has become the order of the day.

The New Marketing Paradigm

As a marketer who is new, or perhaps relatively new to the field, you must understand something and understand it fully if you are to achieve any measure of modern-day success:

The old, archaic systems for marketing and publicizing your business are dead. At the very least they are quickly dying out.

For now, in the modern environment of e-marketing, it is possible for the owner of any business to bypass these old school, ridiculously prejudicial systems totally and to take one's campaign directly to the public at large.

You, yes you, can construct your very own storefront at no cost, from pieces of electronic code, and create traffic through that electronic store that will number in the millions.

We have seen this happen in countless established old-school markets, most recently in the investment world (my old stomping grounds). Nowadays it is only grandpa and grandma who actually go to all the time, trouble and grief to call and make an appointment with the opulently rich, slick-haired stock broker sitting in his top floor office across town, drive over, sink into the leather chair and make some insignificant little trade. The modern investor now plops down in front of the computer in his or her pj's, click - click, six bucks and logged off.

This eventually became a joke among us poor abandoned middlemen. As investment counselors, we collectively found ourselves 'all dressed up with no one to talk to'. It was not funny at the time, but certainly it is now.

With the advent of the Internet, it was simply no longer necessary to grovel before us, the self-important brokers. In the 'old days', I made upwards of six grand on a hundred thousand dollar trade. That six grand came out of the hapless clients pocket and went directly into mine.

When it all went south, there was a great weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth from us poor abandoned middlemen. Nonetheless, happen it did.

Those 'good ol' days' are gone. With them has gone the middleman. In no area is this fast becoming truer than in the world of e-business.

The Fairy Tale

If you are like most new self-marketers, you most likely, however innocently, have believed in a fairy tale. For you believed that once you set up your shiny new website, the rest was just sitting back and waiting for the sales to come rolling in.

Most likely by now you have come to realize that this simply seldom happens. You have certainly come to realize, however reluctantly, that what you perceived to be the end of the road is really just the beginning of a new journey . . .

You must now become a self-marketing specialist. You must learn how to advertise. To promote. To publicize. To develop a public relations plan. To sell. You must do it yourself.

For in this brave new arena, there IS no middleman.

Self-Marketing

Throughout the last 3 decades I have had the opportunity to work with some of the top marketing consultants in the country. From the very beginning, I incorporated their methods into my own.

I internalized the best of the best they could offer me. I systematically experimented with everything they offered and began to consistently use what I found to work. My career at the time depended on my ability to produce verifiable results - not theory.

Numbers - not excuses.

I have continued to this day to use these ideas and methods with great success. Not to brag, but I have built two very successful magazines and one successful marketing agency, among other things. I have helped hundreds build their own businesses. I consult with start up magazines, life coaches, and book authors. In the real world I work with businesses of every kind and description, from moving companies to doctors, antique stores to attorneys and everything in between.

The fields of endeavor are diverse, but the methodology remains the same with a few tweaks. I mention this only to impress upon you that I do know a little about many things, but I really know only one subject very well . . .

Self-Marketing

For many new business owners, the word marketing is a four-letter word. This is because it brings to mind an image that we naturally reject. The very word has a somewhat negative feel. This is because people are simply tired of being bombarded with unwanted marketing messages coming at them from every direction – from newspapers stuffed with flyers to mailboxes stuffed with junk mail to inboxes overwhelmed with spam.

This message glut is not marketing. It is intrusion. Calling this marketing is akin to trying to stuff a hook down a fish's throat and calling that fishing.

We all have things we wish to buy. However, as a general rule, it would be safe to say that we never wish to be SOLD something.

For our purpose here I shall define self-marketing as: The ability to communicate clearly, **DIRECTLY TO THE PUBLIC**, the idea that we have a product our potential client either wants and/or needs, and is willing to take action to acquire.

The Good News

Yes, the field of marketing has changed dramatically in the last 10 years. What used to work no longer works in many cases. Again, with the advent of the Internet, every single rule has been thrown out the window! Even the modern day mega-corps, the old school, know-it-all-big-boys-on-the-block, have now at times found themselves scampering wildly about, trying to figure out what to do next. The Internet stores are destroying traditional brick and mortar stores . . .blah . . . blah . . . blah.

Corporations have come to realize that it is possible for a single individual sitting in a cabin off in the wilds of Idaho somewhere to take the field literally by storm; with no help or company backing whatsoever! It has been proven time and again that deep pockets are no longer a prerequisite to success. This is one of your greatest advantages.

For you need not only survive here - you can thrive here!

Advertising VS Publicity

In the old days, marketing plans were built upon advertising. No more.

It is urgent that you understand that in the modern world of marketing, advertising has taken a back seat to publicity. Creating publicity is key to your success, regardless of your field of endeavor. This is not something that is happening now, or something that will happen soon. It has already happened. If you are still relying on advertising as your primary marketing vehicle, you are in trouble and don't even realize it. Yet.

This is because the public has, as a group, come to distrust advertising messages. In the days of our fathers, these messages produced acceptable response rates because people, in their innocence, believed that no company or corporation would lie or attempt to mislead in their advertising. I don't think I need say this again, but I will. Those days are gone.

We, or those we know, have been taken to the proverbial cleaners one too many times. People simply no longer trust advertising messages as they once did. However, people still trust and believe messages built upon publicity.

Anyone can buy an ad. Anyone who buys the ad can control the message totally. However, it is generally believed that one cannot create positive publicity. If the owner of a company appears on the front page of the newspaper, the public believes he or she deserves to be there (of course, this can be positive or negative publicity). If the local newspaper or TV station puts this person out there, we believe they should be there.

Therefore, **publicity creates trust.**

A key point to be understood here is that you CAN create publicity, thereby creating trust. Publicists are hired specifically to do precisely this. If you have the big bucks, hiring a publicist might be an option. However, it is no longer necessary.

Another key point is that, while advertising COSTS money, publicity is FREE. And so this begs a simple question: Would you rather –

- a. Pay money to create a message that most people will naturally reject and mistrust OR
- b. Develop a message at no cost that people will inherently trust?

Trust

Publicity creates awareness about you and or your company. Publicity is not necessarily ALWAYS purposely created (look at Britney Spears), though this is what I am going to attempt here. It goes without saying that publicity can be positive or negative. Publicity, as a general rule, is therefore not completely controllable. However for our purposes and from this point onward, I will define publicity as:

Your attempt to create, through various means, a positive impression in the minds of your prospective clients or customers.

Publicity is, in a word, positive awareness. Remember that publicity is not marketing. Publicity is not advertising. Publicity and advertising are but two legs of the beast known as marketing.

The First 'Rule' Of Marketing

I have stated over and over again, on my website, articles and in my blog, that you must completely and thoroughly understand the first rule of marketing. That rule is this:

People Only Do Business With People They Trust.

Ultimately, in every message you send to your potential client, whether publicity or advertising, your first and foremost goal must be to create that all-important trust.

You can take classes in publicity. You can take classes in advertising. You cannot take classes in trust building.

When I am asked to offer an opinion on a client's press release or ad or letter, my first reading of the piece is to look for the number of trust building statements. I then analyze the overall feel and positioning of the piece from the trust building perspective.

Now the other side of this coin is that you must not SUBTRACT FROM any trust those clients might already hold in you. Therefore, the third step in this process is to look for those trust destroyers. Only then do I look at the actual mechanics being used.

This is so vital, so basic that it should not need to be verbalized. However, I am somewhat appalled at the messages being put forth by well meaning people in both their publicity and advertising campaigns.

Take a moment today to look at what you are using in your campaigns from this perspective. Are you creating trust? Or are you potentially destroying trust?

Trust can be built or destroyed consciously or unconsciously. Though this goes to the very heart of the matter, I simply do not have the space to cover this completely here, so I will simply recommend you read my recent article 'Creating Trust - Using Words That Sell' located here

<http://www.freepublicitygroup.com/articlecreatingtrust.html>

Anyone can buy an ad and control the content. This does not create mistrust, but Joe Public knows anyone can do this. Very few can create positive publicity. Again, if Joe Public sees someone on the front page of his local newspaper, he believes that person has EARNED the right to be there.

Therefore, **publicity creates trust far more effectively than advertising.**

All that being said, we shall start at the very beginning by asking the most basic of questions:

How does one create publicity that creates trust?

This is accomplished quite simply by creating a trust building message - a brand - and using that brand consistently. This brand, this message, is the core of the message you wish to present to the world. This is at the very center of everything else you will produce in your marketing and publicity campaigns, from press releases to advertisements, from radio interviews to brochures and everything in between. Each and every single sentence or paragraph you produce, from sell sheet to website must contain, contribute to or relate to this branding message in some way.

Please do not go off half-cocked without accomplishing this most basic of steps. Learning to do this can mean the difference between your success or your failure. Any person, from interviewer to web site visitor should be able to perceive this message in the first three seconds of exposure to you and your material. This is precisely how long you have to get that message across. About three seconds.

This is often a subconscious process. In that three seconds you must catch the eye or ear and create enough curiosity to keep that person interested enough to continue listening to your message. How do you know if you have accomplished this? By your response rate. Response rates can be difficult to track in some cases, easy in others.

Tracking Trust - A Quick Example

In this wild and wonderful world of electronic marketing, our trust building efforts can now be tracked! A good example of an easy method is Google Analytics. This is a free tool anyone can use to get great information on the response rate of a particular page or pages on a website. On my sites for example, it will tell me how many people hit the index page - how long they stayed there - and whether they moved to another page on my site or simply clicked away. How can this information be used? Is this important?

You bet it is. Initially I had a rather high 'bounce' rate i.e. people who hit the page, stayed for a few seconds, and then clicked away. This told me my message was not giving them what they wanted. What they wanted was trust. And so I then rewrote, rewrote and again rewrote that page until I now have a situation where X% of people hit the page, X% stay for X minutes, then click through to read an article or two, then move to the purchase page, tell their friends about the site or leave the site.

Eventually, once all the other factors were in place, I began to test by changing just specific WORDS only. In one case, we changed a single word and increased our ongoing click thru rate by 9%. I use this same theory with press release headings and ad taglines. Sometimes one word has the power to increase your trust factor dramatically. This past week has been spent developing a branding statement for a good friend and life coach. A full week of phone conversations and emails, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth to find those all important 4 or 5 words that will say it all in just a few seconds.

Always remember: Marketing your product, be it a business, a book or a practice is not about you. It is about your response. What you believe may be creating trust may actually be destroying that trust in the minds of your BUYERS. Response rates will tell you how you are faring **in the minds of those clients**, regardless of your own personal preferences. You might perceive something to be 'cool' or 'catchy'. However your clients may perceive it to be something altogether different. Your response rates will reveal this to you.

Response ratios allow you to fine tune your message for the greatest response. Other forms of publicity and advertising are somewhat harder to track, but it can be done to a degree.

Creating Positive Publicity

How do we 'create' publicity? Purposely walking an elephant through the mayor's flowerbed is most likely not the best method to use. So here I will begin to discuss the old stand-by; the press release.

In the 'good ol' days', the writer would send a press release to a newspaper, announcing the birth of some new creation. The editors would look down through their magnifying readers at the release and, using their executive position, give the thumbs up or thumbs down, effectively helping to create or possibly helping to destroy the career of the hapless, well-meaning writer of the release.

Well, no more.

For now, the independent marketer can bypass this archaic system totally, if they desire, and take

their work DIRECTLY to the public. If the author has taken the time to do his or her own homework, he or she can succeed IN SPITE OF the obstacles that are, quite simply, no longer obstacles.

Take heart! For the ideas required to accomplish this feat of modern-day marketing are available to anyone. Yes, even you.

I think the best example of this is a young man I spoke with recently who makes literally tens of thousands of dollars per month marketing an ebook! He accomplished this on his own, with no outside help whatsoever. Tens of thousands of dollars, marketing a product that has no cost basis whatsoever, other than the time it took him to write the book. He spends not one dime on advertising.

This is just one example, but it is one of thousands of examples. The opportunity is there and it is real. By now you have most likely come to realize that the old, outdated and archaic systems of the past may not be the path you wish to tread towards self-marketing success.

There is a very important point that you must understand here. As a matter of fact, were I able to impress just a single point upon you here, that point would be this:

The quickest road to marketing success is no longer found in traditional methodologies. It is instead found in the ability to create positive PUBLICITY!

Publicity

THE INTERNET AFFORDS YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO BYPASS THE OLD SYSTEMS UTILIZED IN THE PAST AND TO TAKE YOUR MARKETING AND PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN TO THE PUBLIC DIRECTLY.

People are spending more and more and even more time on the Internet. It is fast becoming a way of life. The Internet affords people the opportunity to find WHAT they need quickly, without being assailed by commercial after commercial! Television, radio, and other forms of commercial based media is fast being replaced by the world-wide web. People have come to see these interruptive marketing messages as intrusive and are reacting negatively, now that there is another choice available.

The Internet too is filled with all types and forms of advertising. Most have learned to screen these blinking banners and popup ads out. These too are being rejected.

Nonetheless it is a fact that while many people have come to detest marketing messages, they still love a good story.

Therefore, the key to getting good response to your marketing message is to learn to create publicity. One of the primary tools in using this strategy is that old standby press release.

The Internet Press Release The Most Powerful Marketing Tool Ever Created

Press releases were never designed as marketing tools. They were designed to release NEWS to the press. Period.

In the old days, one created an acceptable release (there were rigid rules here) and then sent the release off to the media, print, TV, radio, magazine or otherwise. The gatekeepers would then decide whether or not to print the release, offering the submitting entity the opportunity to utilize the media to get a message to the public at no charge.

Of course, people began to take advantage of this and began to use press releases as a 'free' marketing tool. As a result, the gatekeepers of the media were forced to reject more and more of these messages. This eventually became a major problem for the press, as they were literally being 'spammed' with messages that had no place in the world of 'news'. For this reason it became harder and harder to get even valid press releases out to the public. Through the years these gatekeepers have become more and more stringent in regards to what they will allow and will not allow, as well they should.

The media were literally forced into the role of gatekeeper. As the rules became tougher and tougher, the business owner's chances of creating any publicity at all became slimmer and slimmer. Until now.

Internet Press Releases

The Internet press release is, beyond any doubt, one of my favorite tools for generating publicity. I love this, love this, love this. Why?

It CAN be free or at the very least, very low cost.

But the real advantage lies in the fact that there are few gatekeepers. Sending a press release to an editor means that you will have to jump through many hoops to get that release past the gatekeeper. The rules state that the traditional press release will have to be current, newsworthy, geared to the local reader, hold 'real' news value, etc etc. It will have to be well written, follow a very specific format and will need to be timely. Even assuming it meets these criteria, it will still most likely end up in the trashcan. If it does meet all these criteria and manages to get past the keepers of the gate -

It will run in a single publication for one day.

In the web-based version of a press release, many of these hurdles disappear! Or at the very least, they are relaxed. Real bona fide news is defined a little differently out there in cyberspace. (However, keep in mind that the goal here is not simply to put out a press release – the goal is to put out a press release that people will want to read. 'Bob Jones Stubs Big Toe' will not be read. This is not news. Make your release worthy of the reader's time).

In any case, the Internet press release must still be news or IT WILL LOSE ITS CREDIBILITY in the mind of the reader. If something is presented as a press release and it reads like an advertisement, the value as a marketing tool is COMPLETELY LOST.

The Internet press release is a fantastic way to potentially deliver your press release to hundreds of thousands of industry professionals and to millions upon millions of individual consumers DIRECTLY. Unlike the traditional press release, in this version of the press release, you may be a bit more 'sales-y'. A little looser. Brag a little even, if so inclined and if it helps position you. But don't write an ad.

Most importantly, search engines WILL pick up on these releases, if placed on the correct sites. Several will put you right on the first page of Google, if structured properly. For all the above reasons, the Internet press release is an entirely different ballgame.

The Internet press release affords you the following opportunities:

- You can tell your story to the entire buying public, directly.
- The release creates trust more so than any ad of any kind
- The Internet press release can be placed at no cost
- The Internet press release can be keyword optimized for the search engines
- Using links, your release can drive traffic directly to your web site or store
- Placing these releases on key sites will get your release under the eyes of the press ALSO
- Every release can create backlinks to your site, potentially raising your search engine rankings

However, the biggest advantage here is to be found in the nature of the search engines themselves. While a search engine will spider your website periodically, they will spider news sites CONSTANTLY. They are, after all, looking for up to the minute NEWS.

This means that a well-developed press release, placed on the proper sites, will find itself indexed in the search engines almost IMMEDIATELY!

Could it get any better than this?

In my opinion, no it cannot.

The Internet press release accomplishes a number of very important goals simultaneously. I can imagine no other tool or technique that might work better from a mechanical perspective. Now, if that press release is carefully worded to send precisely the right message to the right people, it also becomes a very powerful marketing tool.

Press release submission strategies is one of the specialties of the Free Publicity Focus Group at <http://www.freepublicitygroup.com> . To implement this strategy for maximum response, you will need to learn:

- a. How to develop a press release that will be acceptable to the submission sites
- b. How to maximize keyword strategies within the release body
- c. How to structure titles for maximum exposure in the search engines
- d. How to determine whether a particular site actually puts your release into the hands of the media
- e. How to use trust building statements within the release
- f. How to develop link strategies

- g. How to create curiosity that leads the reader to click through to your site
- h. What the gatekeepers at these sites consider to be acceptable so that you are not wasting your time submitting releases that will not be posted
- i. How to structure your release to create maximum credibility for you and your company

The real power of using the Internet press release as a marketing tool becomes apparent when this tool is used as a component of an overall marketing strategy.

This is but one of the many benefits the Free Publicity Focus Group
<http://www.freepublicitygroup.com>
can provide for you.

I invite you to visit our site and explore this exciting opportunity. All initial consultations are completely free and without obligation. Feel free to contact me at info@freepublicitygroup.com with any questions or feel free to call at 910-842-9248.

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