

Can National Publicity Help Your Local Business?

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Savvy entrepreneurs have a public relations plan and a program to build awareness and generate sales. But if a publicity opportunity comes along that's outside your market, is it worth pursuing? Yes, if it's national publicity with a respected media outlet. Here's why.

Any kind of news coverage adds to your company's name recognition and there's no downside so long as it is positive. Of course, you want the kind of promotion that can lead to direct sales. National news coverage can do that, if you know how to "merchandise" your publicity.

1. Get as many copies as you can and pass the publication around or mail it to customers and prospects. Why not send a brief email and include a link to the publication? Most people like to receive news and want to be aware when a local company receives national attention. It's one more way to "touch" your customers and subtly remind them about your company's quality and the leadership position you are establishing.
2. Some national publications carry prestige, which you can merchandise by referencing "as seen in" on your advertising, counter-top displays and email signature. When you are associated with names like *Newsweek* or *The Wall Street Journal* you have credibility that sets you apart from your competition.
3. It helps to be recognized as an expert, which is something that positive news coverage can do for you. Research shows that people associate well known names with quality. If your name is more famous than your competitors, most people would rather choose you. Further, you have the implied endorsement of a well-known publication because they have selected you or your company as "news."
4. National news coverage is sometimes picked up by the Associated Press or other syndicated services, which exponentially increases the number of media outlets, including broadcast, that might carry your name to more people.
5. Other reporters sometimes follow the lead of major national news sources, which can lead to requests for interviews for local publications as well as radio and TV news programs. If you're smart (or lucky) enough to achieve this kind of "spin off" news attention, the media starts feeding on itself. But why wait for lightning to strike again? Write a press release announcing the fact that you have been mentioned or featured in the _____, which is distributed nationwide. Try this: "ABC Co., a local service, was recently featured in *USA Today*. Mr. BC is available for interviews and on-air discussions about _____ . " And be sure to put your contact information at the top, where it's easy to find.
6. National attention sometimes confers an air of celebrity status, which truly separates you from the rest. We are a celebrity-obsessed country, and there is only room for one celebrity in your category. It might as well be you.

7. And it's not just copies of publications that you should distribute where it can do the most good. If you've been on radio or TV, be sure to request a recording for your own use. With help from a computer savvy friend, your tapes can be transferred to DVD and then inexpensively copied using a PC. You can use the DVDs as part of a direct mail campaign, which you should follow up with sales calls and your best "closing" pitch.

Get the idea? These are just a few ways that national attention can boost your local business. Who knows? It might inspire you to go regional, or even national.

PR works best in conjunction with other marketing strategies to raise awareness and generate results. If you understand these ideas, you probably already have an overall marketing plan and you're putting it to work.

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