

Fit The Media Into Your Marketing Mix

By William Essex



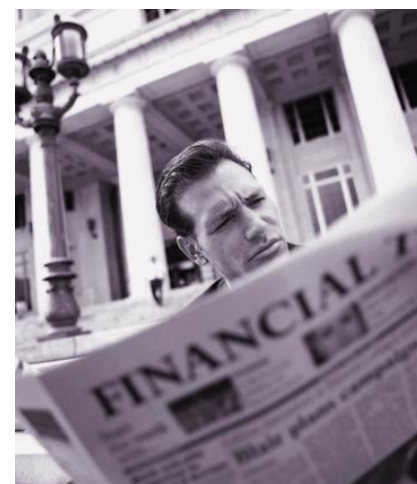
Media contact is a fact of business life. There are trade magazines, newsletters, newspapers, business programmes on the TV and radio, online media. They're all staffed by journalists hunting for people who can provide comments, opinions, interviews, sound bites and quotes.

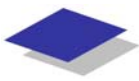
Your colleagues, customers and competitors will get used to seeing your name in print and your face on screen. Your bottom line will benefit.

If you can give journalists what they want, in the way they want it, they'll return the favour. You'll get a raised profile for yourself and your company, and access to a much wider customer base. Your colleagues, customers and competitors will get used to seeing your name in print and your face on screen. Your bottom line will benefit.

But how do you deal effectively with the media? Here are my top ten tips for handling journalists effectively.

1. Be available. How easy would it be for a journalist, a total stranger, to get through to you for the first time? Journalists don't like hold music. There's always somebody else they can call. Brief your staff that anybody saying, "I'm a journalist," gets put through. And if you're expecting a journalist at the office, brief reception to call you when they arrive. If the journalist is going to have to wait, get rid of the rival publication in the stack of reading matter on the coffee table.
2. Read them, watch them, work out what they want and then make yourself known. Press releases, letters to the editor (or directly to the journalist), even simple fact sheets giving your name, your contact details and the subjects on which you can speak – send them out! Don't wait until you have news. You just want the journalists to have your name on file.
3. Have something to say. Doesn't matter what, as long as it isn't a history of the company, or the words, "I'll think about it and call you back later." Opinions are good, and pithy one-liners are best. Journalists want quotes, not conversations. Much of the time, it's more important to say something catchy and interesting; than it is to answer the question you've been asked.
4. Stay available. If they call you back afterwards to check the spelling of your name, for example, and they can't get through, your quote might be used anonymously, or not at all. You lose all that lovely publicity.
5. Return calls immediately. Journalists have deadlines. Rather than wait until later to hear from you, they'll try somebody else. Brief your staff to alert you when a journalist leaves a number.
6. Take media calls even when there's nothing in it for you. If you help them when they need it they'll be more likely to help you when you need it.
7. Look at the other guy's mugshot, and get a better one taken. You don't have to look like an embalmed head-and-shoulders waxwork. Move a little, or maybe talk while the mugshot's being taken. News photographers can be better at this kind of thing than wedding specialists.
8. Don't mention your advertising. Even if you do a lot of it. Journalists like to think they're fearless, independent seekers after truth. Seriously. It's just tactless to point out that you're pretty much bankrolling the publication that employs them.
9. Don't be defensive. Don't start out by worrying that you might be misquoted. Journalists are neutral unless you give them a reason not to be. You won't be quoted unless you speak. You won't be misquoted if you speak clearly and simply. There are "investigative" titles out there that might be worth avoiding, and sometimes you might be better off not speaking to the media at all. But most of the time, journalists just want to get a quote and get off the line.
10. Don't sell. Journalists aren't going to buy your product. They're not going to quote your sales pitch. The benefit of featuring in editorial space is that you come across as an authority. The audience will get that message.





Finally, here's the value-added, totally free bonus tip. In a media interview, the journalist may not know the right questions to ask. You're the authority on this subject, after all. So if there's something important that you want to talk about, and the interview hasn't gone anywhere near it, suggest it. The only sure way into a journalist's long-term contact book is to be the one who saves them from missing the big issue of the day.

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 Photograph taken by Clemmie Essex

About the Author:

William Essex is author of 'Can I Quote You on That? A practical handbook for company executives who deal with the media', published by Harriman House. He is a freelance journalist, writer and occasional broadcaster, who also trains executives to deal with the media. He has experience on both sides of the camera, microphone, notepad and digital recording device and likes to believe that dealing with the media successfully need not be a stressful experience. You just need to know what they want and how to provide it in a way that also delivers what you want. That's the idea behind his book. Can I Quote You on That? (Harriman House, 2006) Available to buy in the BBF Bookshop.

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I think my idea of retirement might be to one day work a 40-hour week.

Michael Eisner

Business Insight... Change Your Attitude

When Jack Farrell finished his articles to become a chartered accountant, he struck out in a radically different direction from most of his colleagues. Instead of settling for a job with one of the major accounting firms, he borrowed £50,000 and bought a block of land in New Zealand. The incredulity of his peers at this oddball decision quickly changed when Jack's new company, quite literally, struck gold. That block of land is now New Zealand's largest gold mine, and Jack is a multi-millionaire.

Summed up in those few sentences, Jack's progress sounds all so easy - but right from the start he encountered serious obstacles to achieving his dreams. I suppose we can all have dreams, but how we deal with the obstacles is the critical point. And one of Jack's favourite sayings sums up his philosophy. "Change the thing, or change your attitude." He often tells us.

Most of us forget the "change the attitude" option. If we can't get circumstances - or, more usually, people - the way we want them, we think we have no choice but to be unhappy.

I have come to understand there's an amazing power within this simple philosophy. Sometimes, after making a conscious attempt to change my attitude, old problems, or difficult relationships, are transformed in a quite wonderful way.

David Michie, formerly a London-based consultant, is now principal of Mosaic Reputation Management, in Australia. He has written several internationally-published PR thrillers and, more recently, a book about his encounter with Tibetan Buddhism - "Buddhism for Busy People."

Don't worry if you don't know what Covered Warrants is, here's an explanation:

Covered Warrants – these are a recent addition to the range of stock market related investments that an investor can buy. These products provide the ability to make a profit from a fall in the value of a company's shares, as well as a rise. They provide investors with the opportunity to gain exposure to other instruments that are not normally available on the stock market. Covered warrants, which can be bought for as little as £50, do this by giving you the right, but not the obligation, to buy or sell a share at a specific price and at a specific time. You could, for example, take the view that a company's share was going to fall in price over the next six months and make money if they did. This is known as 'shorting' a share. You are free to sell the warrants you have bought at any time through a stockbroker, just like ordinary shares. Covered warrants, which are issued by investment banks, can be used as an insurance policy as well as for betting on share price falls. If, for example, you hold ordinary shares in a company you are hoping the shares will go up in value. But you could hedge your bets by buying a warrant that would pay out if its share price fell. You can also use them to take bigger bets on the market. When you buy shares in a company, the amount you gain is limited to the rise in the share price: if it rises by 20%, you make 20%. But if, for example, you believe a share is set to bounce, you could buy a covered warrant that gives you ten times its gain. So, if the share were to rise 20%, your investment would rise 200%.

Source: Bizezia's Glossary of Key Financial Terms and Business Ratios.