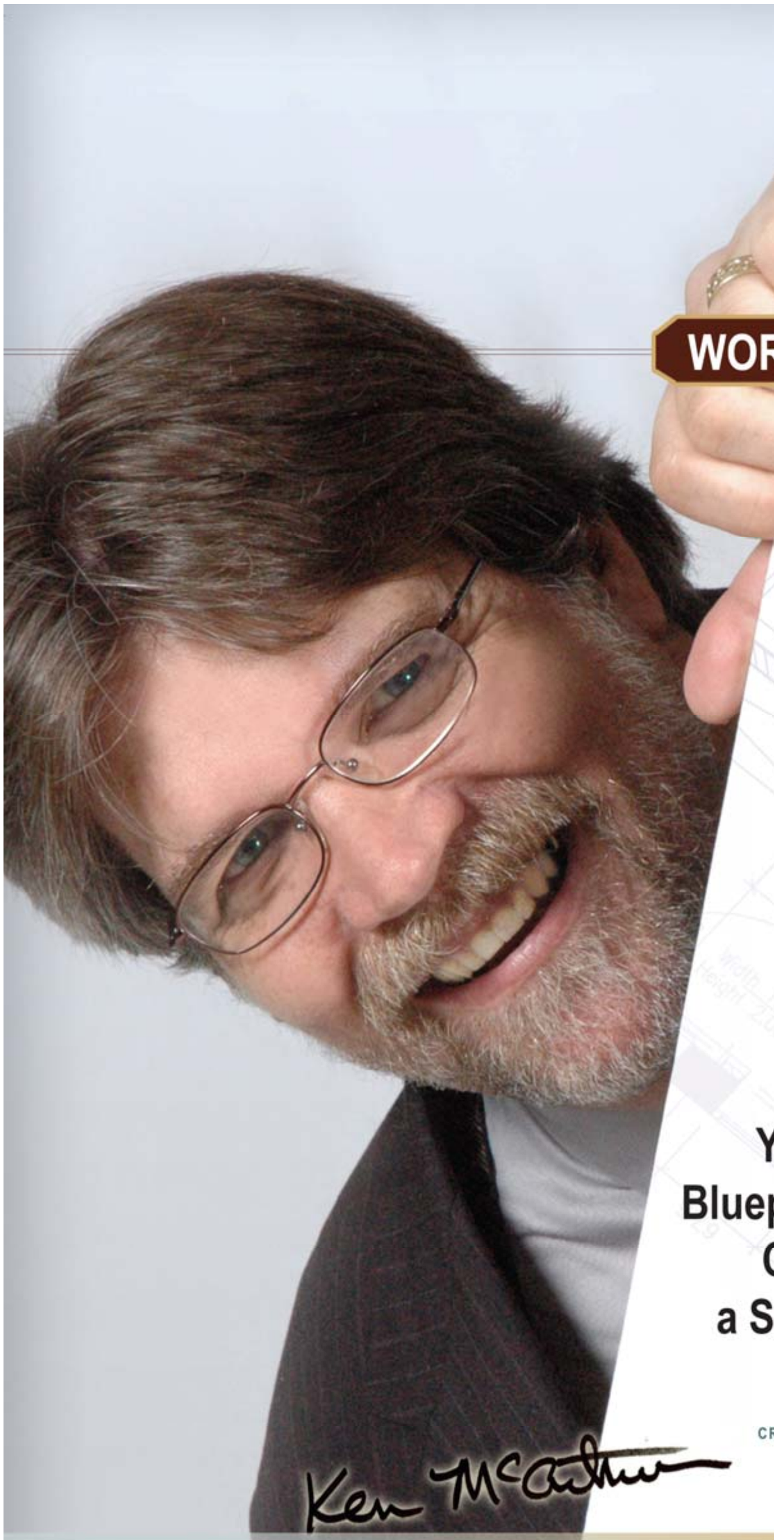
INFO PRODUCT BLUEPRINT

WORKBOOK



Your Comprehensive Blueprint and Action Plan for Creating and Selling a Successful Info Product

CREATED BY **Kenneth A. McArthur**

DISCLAIMERS

Pursuant to U.S. State & Federal Laws the following is a statement of your legal rights.

Disclaimer & Legal Rights

No Warranties

All websites, products and services are provided, as is, without warranty of any kind, either express or implied, including, but not limited to, the implied warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose. Our company does not warrant, guarantee, or make any representations regarding the use, or the results of the use, of the websites, products, services or written materials in the terms of correctness, accuracy, reliability, currentness or otherwise. The entire risk as to the results and performance of the websites, products and services are assumed by you. If the websites, products, services or written materials are defective, you, and not our company, assume the entire cost of all necessary servicing, repair or correction.

This is the only warrant of any kind, either express or implied, that is made by our company. No oral or written information or advice given by our company shall create a warranty or in any way increase the scope of this warranty, and you may not rely on such information or advice to do so.

Customer Remedy

Our company's entire liability, and the purchaser's exclusive remedy, shall be a refund of the price paid or replacement of our products, at our option. We limit replacement to thirty days. All remedies are limited to the United States.

Some states do not allow the exclusion or limitation of liability, so the above limitations may not apply to you.

Limitation & Exclusion Of Liability

These warranties exclude all incidental or consequential damages. Our company, and its suppliers, will not be liable for any damages whatsoever, including without limitation, damages for loss of business profits, business interruption, loss of business information, or other pecuniary loss. Some states do not allow the exclusion or limitation of liability, so the above limitations may not apply to you.

Legal Forum, Choice Of Laws & Official Language

This offering is a contract between you the buyer and our business, the seller. The seller is located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. and by doing business with us you agree that this offering is made from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. and shall be governed by the laws of the State of Pennsylvania and the U.S.A.. By electing to participate in this offer, you are entering into a contract.

This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Pennsylvania, without regard to its conflict of laws rules. Any legal action arising out of this Agreement shall be litigated and enforced under the laws of the State of Pennsylvania. In addition, you agree to submit to the jurisdiction of the courts of the State of Pennsylvania, and that any legal action pursued by you shall be within the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of Philadelphia in the State of Pennsylvania, USA.

The terms constituting this offering are set forth in writing on this Website. You hereby agree to submit to the jurisdiction of the State and Federal Courts located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. to resolve

Copyright © 2008 by McArthur Business Systems, Inc.
All Rights Reserved

any disputes or litigation hereunder. Whether or not you choose to print this offering, containing the terms and conditions as described herein, you agree that this contract constitutes a writing.

This agreement is being written in English, which is to be the official language of the contract's text and interpretation. If you do not agree with the above terms and conditions, you have the option to not participate in this offer.

Copyrights

This Website and information contains copyrighted material, trademarks, and other proprietary information. You may not modify, publish, transmit, participate in the transfer or sale of, create derivative works of, on in any way exploit, in whole or in part, any Proprietary or other Material.

License

All images, text, contents, products and scripts are licensed and never sold, unless otherwise stated. Reproduction is prohibited. You may not use, copy, emulate, clone, rent, lease, sell, modify, decompile, disassemble, otherwise reverse engineer, or transfer the licensed program or product, or any subset of the licensed program or product, except as provided for in this agreement or expressly in writing. Any such unauthorized use shall result in immediate and automatic termination of this license and may result in criminal and/or civil prosecution.

Our company reserves all rights not expressly granted here.
Copyright © 2003-2008 InternetMarketingLawProducts.com for
McArthur Business Systems, Inc.

Copyright © 2008 by McArthur Business Systems, Inc.
All Rights Reserved

EARNINGS & INCOME DISCLAIMERS

Any earnings or income statements, or earnings or income examples, are only estimates of what we think you could earn. There is no assurance you'll do as well. If you rely upon our figures, you must accept the risk of not doing as well.

Where specific income figures are used, and attributed to an individual or business, those persons or businesses have earned that amount. There is no assurance you'll do as well. If you rely upon our figures; you must accept the risk of not doing as well.

Any and all claims or representations, as to income earnings on this website, are not to be considered as average earnings. Testimonials are not representative.

There can be no assurance that any prior successes, or past results, as to income earnings, can be used as an indication of your future success or results.

Monetary and income results are based on many factors. We have no way of knowing how well you will do, as we do not know you, your background, your work ethic, or your business skills or practices. Therefore we do not guarantee or imply that you will win any incentives or prizes that may be offered, get rich, that you will do as well, or make any money at all. There is no assurance you'll do as well. If you rely upon our figures; you must accept the risk of not doing as well.

Internet businesses and earnings derived therefrom, have unknown risks involved, and are not suitable for everyone. Making decisions based on any information presented in our products, services, or website, should be done only with the knowledge that you could experience significant losses, or make no money at all. Only risk capital should be used.

All products and services by our company are for educational and informational purposes only. Use caution and seek the advice of qualified professionals. Check with your accountant, lawyer or professional advisor, before acting on this or any information.

Users of our products, services and website are advised to do their own due diligence when it comes to making business decisions and all information, products, and services that have been provided should be independently verified by your own qualified professionals. Our information, products, and services on this website should be carefully considered and evaluated, before reaching a business decision, on whether to rely on them. All disclosures and disclaimers made herein or on our site, apply equally to any offers, prizes, or incentives, that may be made by our company.

You agree that our company is not responsible for the success or failure of your business decisions relating to any information presented by our company, or our company products or services.

Copyright © 2003-2008 InternetMarketingLawProducts.com for
McArthur Business Systems, Inc.

Copyright © 2008 by McArthur Business Systems, Inc.
All Rights Reserved

INSTRUCTION SHEET

Congratulations on taking action and starting your journey to create your Info Product!

One of the first things I would like for you to realize is that this will take work. For some people this will be one of the toughest things you have ever done in your life.

Build A Success Path

In order to get the most out of this workbook you will want to study it several times. I recommend that as you are going through the workbook you take notes and use highlighters.

As you go through each module, break the sections down to see if each area is one you personally want to tackle or will hire or partner with someone who is an expert in that area.

Answer the Questions and Design Your Plan

As you proceed through each module make sure you pay attention to the questions. As you answer each question follow through with the action steps. These actions steps are designed to make sure you stay on track and accomplish your goal-your very own info product.

Tips And Hints

Italics: Throughout the workbook if you see part of the article in italics, this means that section is from Dan Giordano the workbook editor. Dan will sometimes introduce a contributor, give an overview of the section, or add some comments at the end of a section. It's just our way of letting you know a different person is writing, not the author of the section.

Section Overview: At the start of each section you'll have an overview of the article. As we have many contributors, you'll receive a brief introduction of the author. (For a more detailed contributor information go to the Appendix for information on Info Product Blueprint Contributors).

Things You Will Learn: In the boxes at the start of each topic you will find a list of key points covered in the section. Other points will be covered, but the section emphasis is on the ones in the box.

Notes: Take notes as you read. This is designed to be a working tool for you. So mark it up, highlight and write notes. We want you to succeed and noting important or ah-ha's will help you when designing your plan.

Questions: In the workbook, there are questions included to guide you in the development of your own info product. Take the time to thoughtfully answer the questions. This is the basis of your plan. Some questions will look simple and even repetitive. But it's all part of the blueprint. So take the time and invest in yourself. You will use the information to develop your product and your action plan.

Be patient with yourself. There's a lot of information included in Info Product Blueprint. We've included audios, video and plenty of printed material to help you in your product development. We're already planned on some more updated material that will be posted on the resource page. So make sure you register for the updates (www.infoproductblueprint.com/developer).

We want this to be your reference tool, your guidebook.

YOUR Blueprint for developing an info product.

Seize your opportunity and share your success with us.

The Info Product Blueprint Team

Ken McArthur

Kenneth A. McArthur

Alysan Delaney-Childs, Project Manager and Editor
Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Launching With Style

Module 9

Module 9: Launching With Style

Info Product Blueprint was created by
Kenneth A. McArthur

Alysan Delaney-Childs, Project Manager and Editor
Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Launching With Style

Module 9

Section 1: Launch Overview

By Alysan Delaney-Childs

Info Product Blueprint was created by
Kenneth A. McArthur

Alysan Delaney-Childs, Project Manager and Editor
Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

Section 1

Launch Overview

Why bother planning?

What you will learn in this Section:

- Stages of a product launch

Launching an info product doesn't require a degree in engineering or business, but you will need to set up a plan. A launch plan will give you:

- Faster development time
- More effective marketing
- Systematic approach to customer service
- Ability to time and catch the window of opportunity

Many people see the product launch as the 'selling' of your product. Your successful launch begins not with the selling of your product, but with the start of your idea. Some of the steps you've completed (hope you have!) will come together when you put together your launch process.

Launching is truly a process with each step being interdependent. Skip a step and you have decreased your opportunity for launch success (lost income, too!). A successful launch doesn't happen by accident – it happens by plan.

Planning For The 'What If'

Be prepared for things to go wrong. Much like you have a spare tire in your car 'in case of,' a good plan will help you anticipate many potential problems and be ready to react and solve. Flexibility, a sense of humor and a willingness to adapt will help you launch and still enjoy the process.

Stages of Product Launch

There are three distinct stages of product launch.

Market and Product Research

This is the discovery stage. You find your market, competitors and what is needed to reach that market. This stage gives you the knowledge to develop and present your product to a specific niche market.

Product and Message Development

This is the 'making' phase where the product is made and your message to sell your product is developed.

Notes

Marketing and Sales Implementation

This is the completion stage for your info product.

You've researched and developed the strategies and your product. Now it's time to plug it all into your implementation timeline.

Notes

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

What's Next?

Use the checklists to ensure you've completed all of the necessary steps. If you are missing some steps, take the time to complete that step. The saying, "Plan your work and work your plan" is the key to product launch success.

Next . . . Defining Launch Objectives
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Launching With Style

Module 9

Section 2: Defining Launch Objectives

By Alysan Delaney-Childs

Info Product Blueprint was created by
Kenneth A. McArthur

Alysan Delaney-Childs, Project Manager and Editor
Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

Section 2

Defining Launch Objectives

Defining your launch objectives is part of your overall business strategy. In his "Manifesto," Rich Schefren describes dominating a niche so well with so many products that savvy competitors leave you alone. What does that take? Running a business like a business and doing it well.

What you will learn in this Section:

- The importance of defining the desired end result

Running A Business Well

Launch objectives need to be part of your overall business strategy. What's your ultimate goal? In real estate investment, it's called developing an exit strategy for a piece of real estate. When smart real estate investors buy a property they have already decided whether it is a long or short-term hold and whether they want to rent or resell quickly. It's no different in Internet marketing. Your desired outcome shapes your launch objectives.

What's your desired end-result?

When I talked with Internet marketers about upcoming launches, most of them mentioned they wanted to sell a large quantity of their product. That's all well and good, but in addition do you want to:

- Build a huge list?
- Want cash fast?
- Want to make a name for yourself?

The strategies you choose will vary depending on the objective you choose. Objectives will let you know your have succeeded as well as giving you objective placemarkers along your development path.

Build A Huge List?

To build a huge list quickly you might want to really incentivize your JV partners and affiliates. Some techniques you might use would be to pay the partners and affiliates 100% of the income. This will motivate many to promote your product.

Another technique would be to immediately pay the partners and affiliates as soon as you are paid.

The downside to this is you will end up absorbing the cost of returns and refunds.

Notes

Want Cash Fast?

If you want to increase your bank account, structure your offer so your JV partners receive 70% and your affiliates receive 50% on a one-time-offer (OTO). You get cash from the offer, your partners and affiliates do as well, and you have a list of 'buyers' to upsell at a later time.

If you want all of the cash for yourself, then use outside publicity and press releases to create a media extravaganza. This one requires media savvy or a friend with media savvy to accomplish.

Make a name for yourself?

You getting visibility means creating buzz for yourself as well as the product. It will influence your choice of photos, graphics, publicity and launch information used. You may choose to use an aggressive public relations campaign or a viral campaign for name and face recognition.

You can develop a viral campaign to get your name out. Viral campaigns will require planning and implementation from the start of your program.

Make sure your name is included in your product packaging, sales and promotional copy. Encourage people giving testimonials to include your name when giving the testimonial.

Have professional photos taken. Make sure your photos reflect who you are. If you are a suit and tie person, then wear the suit. If you are casual and playful in your style, then have the photos reflect the person you are. Find a photographer you can relax with and who brings out the best in you. Check out Mary Mazzullo's section and DVD on how to get the best photos.

Notes

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Smooth Progression Through Stages of Launch?

From start to finish you need to have a game plan. A plan allows you to anticipate slowdowns and problems. It forces you to develop alternatives. That way you will know what to do next and won't be scrambling when plan B or C needs to go into effect or you have to postpone your launch date.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Defining Launch Objectives Self-Assessment Questions

1. What do I want as a desired outcome for my product launch?

____
____
____
____
____

2. What steps do I need to take to accomplish this?

____
____
____
____
____

Next . . . Building Buzz

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Launching With Style

Module 9

Section 3: Building Buzz

By Alysan Delaney-Childs

Info Product Blueprint was created by
Kenneth A. McArthur

Alysan Delaney-Childs, Project Manager and Editor
Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

Section 3

Building Buzz

Word of mouth has become fashionable. This age old marketing strategy is being promoted now as the hot trend to follow. It's even acquired a new name: BUZZ.

What you will learn in this Section:

- What buzz is
- Ways to feed the buzz

In most circles buzz is a very high level of word of mouth discussion of products, services and people, but for our discussion we'll cover all means of generating buzz. You can decide how much and where you want to start your buzz strategy.

With online and offline connectiveness increasing through cell phones, personal space networks such as MySpace.com, word of mouth has become easier to accomplish than ever before. The days of word of mouth being exclusively through the office grapevine are long gone.

So Why Buzz?

Buzz is the strategy that drives visitors to your website after hearing your story or information about your product, website or you. Buzz implies you are cool, interesting or otherwise worthy of attention. It gives people the reason to visit your website, talk about you in forums and post on your blog.

Your goal when selling an info product is to create buzz on two fronts.

- You want buzz to get partners and affiliates interested
- You want buzz to get customers (your niche market) to visit your website and eventually buy.

The very best buzz is when you no longer have to 'push' your message out, but it acquires a life of its own. This is when people tell friends and pass the information along. This buzz is viral marketing at its best.

What Does Buzz Do?

Buzz creates an energy and momentum to your product launch. Mike Filsaime credits George Lucas of Star Wars movie fame as the first to use buzz to create interest in movies and other marketing ventures. Today, the legacy of movie marketing buzz lives on with Harry Potter movies and books being announced one to two years before they are released. Now, you may not be a movie promoter, but you can still create buzz in your specific niche and with the partners you want to encourage.

Notes

To create buzz, you need to get your name out in the community. I use the term community, because your market may not being entirely online or it maybe different than the Internet marketing niche.

You want your name to be where and when people talk about the new, the different and the trends. You want to have people saying, “I heard about that,” and those that didn’t will quickly search for you on Google to find out more.

Getting your name out in the community means doing the usual things like having a signature file, writing articles and more. BUT it means doing it with a plan. The start of buzz is a carefully planned and orchestrated event.

This section of your launch plan needs to be completed a good thirty days in advance to give you adequate time to develop your plan, write the material and then start the buzz. Your goal is to have your buzz get started and then start developing a life of its own.

Buzz generation needs a hook, something special to grab someone’s attention. This is important for developing the viral character of buzz. You want to have the information passed along person to person, and to be highly visible.

You want to be discovered or found by the people in your niche market. This is where your market research comes into play. What resources does your market use? What do they read? Where do they lurk? How can you reach them? How do you get people into your message?

The Usual Ways of Getting The Word Out

There are some common strategies which you should build into every launch to develop name recognition. Think of the following as the basics. Use these techniques as the foundation of your plan. Okay, let’s list the traditional and then go on.

- Writing articles
- Having a blog
- Posting in forums
- Having Autoresponder e-courses
- Offering valuable content as a downloadable report from your site (free of course)
- Offering valuable content as a downloadable report for a charge
- Host a teleseminar
- Use a great signature file for tagline
- Write a press release
- Write and promote through ads

Notes

Writing Articles

Writing articles is a good way of getting your name out and the name of your product. Plan for articles to be written and ready to go approximately one to two months prior to launch day. This will vary slightly by the type and size of launch you do. The larger the launch, the more lead time you will need.

You want to write many articles for the two groups you want to target. Use excerpts or clips from your product to develop your articles. If you don't have clips, then write short informational tips. Of course one tip could say that certain products, services or software could be of assistance.

Develop articles to inform your potential partners about your expertise and product. This is not a sales letter. This is a mini-report designed to allow your partners and affiliates to give their subscribers valuable information. Your partners use these articles for content in their blog, newsletter, e-zine or emails.

Having resources for them ready and available to use will be to your benefit. Anytime you make life easier for your partner you will be appreciated. Suggest they personalize or alter the information so you don't have duplicate articles diluting your effect online or offline.

The second group you want to inform is your potential customer. Go back to your research. Where and how can you reach them? Write short articles (300 to 600 words) and post the articles to a variety of directories. Submit articles to the e-zines where your potential customers will be. Use the article directories to share your expertise online. 'How To' articles are quick and easy to write and used by many e-zines. You need to post to several directories and the easiest way to do this is to use article-posting software. (See Resource Guide at www.infoproductblueprint.com/resources/.)

Blog It

Start a blog. Recycle and use the articles as posts. Keep them short and concise. Include keywords from your research to encourage higher ranking in the search engines.

Have your webmaster (or you) get your blog indexed. Indexing is the official way of notifying the search engines your blog is available for viewing. Search engines love the changing information in blogs and you can get noticed very quickly once you are indexed.

Include tip lists that are quick and easy to write about your area of expertise. Again, include the keywords in your writing to encourage the search engine ranking. Invite people to add their own tips.

Notes

Forums

Participate in forums. Hopefully you have already found the forums where your potential partners and/or customers hang out. If you haven't done this, go to FindYourForum.com or type the name of your topic/niche and 'forum' into a search engine. If a forum is listed online, you can find it.

Add comments on relevant threads of conversation. Before you post, please observe the etiquette rules of the forums. Most forum members will react loudly if you just announce or blatantly sell. Get involved, share your expertise, and ask questions. Have a great signature file or tag line when and where allowed. Forums are a building process and a great way to find customers and potential partners.

E-Course

Develop a short e-course to inform your potential customers. Give valuable content, but only have the complete details in your product.

White Paper or Report

Write a content rich report in PDF format to give away in exchange for a person's email address and name. Promote the report as if you would a product. Think of the report as another promotional piece for your product. You definitely want to have great content, but the content is not complete. For the whole story or complete package the person will have to buy your product.

Some Internet marketers have used this basic technique with a particularly effective hook or interest angle. This strategy has been used very effectively by Rich Schefren to promote his coaching program (Marketing Manifesto), Mike Filsaime (Butterfly Marketing the Missing Chapters), Keith Wellman (the first couple of List FX Secrets) and many other marketers. When you do this, you invite your partners and affiliates to promote the special report.

In one launch a marketer paid each partner or affiliate $.50 for each visitor that clicked and signed up for the special report. This incentivized the affiliates and partners and helped increase the potential client list of the marketer.

Signature Files

Signature files are another important way of getting and keeping your name, your product and your website visible. A signature file is free promotion, so use it! It can contain the following information: your name, website, marketing tagline, an offer for a free report and above all of the URL for your website. Make the URL clickable by using the full URL. i.e.

Notes

http://www.yourwebsite.com/specialreport. Test your link to make sure it works and leads people to the correct page for your report or special offer.

Your signature file is used for every email you send out and is allowed to be used by some forums. You can have multiple versions of the signature file for different purposes. You can even test the effectiveness of each tagline by sending people who click on your link to various pages or reports.

Press Releases

Press releases have and remain a great way to get your name and story out in the media. The key is to have a story. You need to find a newsworthy angle to get published. Just announcing a new product will not get much notice. Write your release to the market you want to reach. Local resources can work very well. Find a specific writer who covers your topic or expertise and send the release to that writer with an introduction as to why you sent it to them. It could relate to the topics they cover, a follow-up to a previous story they wrote or a breaking story.

With online press release services you will find it even easier to get the word out about your product and service. Press releases can be targeted for local, regional or international release.

PRWeb.com, Free-Press-Release.com and PRLeads.com are just a few of the services available to get your press release out to the media. Some of these services are free, but some are a paid service. In my experience, you have better distribution when you pay for placement of your release. Take the free class offered by PRWeb.com that will answer many of your questions on the process needed to get a press release out.

Use keywords in your press release as they help for search engine rankings. Don't abuse the use of keywords by repeating one word over and over. This annoys and makes your release a throw-away.

Promote through Ads

Your marketing research gave you some idea of where to find your target market. Place ads in e-zines that your potential customers use. Offer something as an inducement for someone giving you his or her name and email address. Some resources can be found at:

- AffiliateShowcase.com/AdvertisingResources.htm
- Ezinelinks.com/indexu/index.php
- New-List.com/
- Ezine-Dir.com/

Notes

Stand Out From The Crowd

Take it another step and tweak the system. Use some of the personal space communities such as MySpace.com, Friendster.com, and Zanger.com, or less trendy such as Ryze.com or LinkedIn.com to start your networking and build the buzz.

If you are creative and it fits your target group, post a video on YouTube.com. YouTube.com is one of the fastest growing websites today. Displaying videos encourages the sharing of information and experiences. Creativity is the operating word.

Sites such as Flickr.com and del.icio.us are also places using social bookmarking. Social bookmarking sites are those where website users post helpful Internet resources. A user posts links one would usually keep in a browser's bookmark or favorites file on a public site and 'tags' or label the link. This makes the resources easily available for others to see and access.

RSS: Really Simple Syndication

Use RSS feed from your blog to distribute your content to other online publishers, reports and news people can republish. RSS, or really simple syndication, allows people to 'subscribe' to the content on your website or blog. This extends your reach to many other sites and people. With the help of your website programmer you can start providing content to other websites.

For more information, use a browser to search 'How to publish your RSS news feed on your website or blog.' The code is fairly straightforward and easy to use. Again, consider your market. Will an RSS reach the potential partners and customers you want in your market?

Have A Teleseminar

Teleseminars are a great way of getting your name known and the buzz out about your product. The idea is to give valuable content and either offer or sell a valuable content report. Both the free and the paid reports have worked well for driving traffic to a site.

In the words of Gary Ambrose of Email Aces, ' you need to train a list to buy.' Certainly, having a report for a nominal charge such as $1 to $10 will weed out the freebie people. You will need to balance that decision with the niche you are targeting. Some people need to process more information to make a decision and your free report could be the tipping point for them.

Notes

Create A Video

Multimedia is a great way of creating buzz. The idea is to be creative. Take a minute to look at Sterling Valentine's videos he created for *JV Formula* and for Mike Filsaime's *Butterfly Manuscript*. (See the Resources section online at www.infoproductblueprint.com/resources/.) Sterling created a great video to create buzz among potential affiliates and customers.

Some marketers have taken and used video in a similar way to the free report. Instead of using a PDF, they use either a downloadable or streaming video to create buzz and showcase the product. Video is becoming easier and easier to use. On one of the DVD's in this package, Mike Koenigs shows you how easy it is to develop your own video infomercial. In Module 3, Rocket Helstrom writes about the production of videos and equipment needed.

Special Events

Promotional events are an effective way of getting buzz going. Announce or preview your product at an event such as industry seminar and trade show. Bluetooth, the wireless phone technology, effectively stopped a marketing trade show using a take off of the movie, "The Thomas Crown Affair."

Adapting the scene where an art museum is filled with many men in bowler hats carrying brief case, Bluetooth assembled several hundred men in tuxedos and women in black dresses wearing sunglasses to enter a trade show en masse. They then passed out blue cards with the Bluetooth logo and a message. Over the next two days, the Bluetooth group again appeared at the tradeshow. Measuring name-recognition both before and after the appearances showed name-recognition for Bluetooth had dramatically increased.

Now you may not have the budget for a promotion like this, but you can create buzz in the packaging and the presentation of your offer. Graphics can enhance the look and buzz of your offer.

A recent launch started off with a preview report saying, "AdSense is Dead." The graphics on the website showed a skeleton and vultures reinforcing the theme. Yanik Silver effectively promoted with staging his seminar for secret agents. He called the event the Underground Seminar and offered the recordings in a silver briefcase much like secret agents use in movies.

Notes

Notes

Your Launch As An Event

In his *Product Launch Formula*, Jeff Walker talks about creating your launch day as the anticipated event. By creating marketing and accompanying creative materials you can create buzz so that people and partners look forward to your product launch.

Butterfly Marketing, *Product Launch Formula*, and many other product launches have used planned marketing launches to position the first day of sales as the event itself. Like any other marketing plan, this requires planning to pull off.

Graphics, packaging, articles, promotional materials, emails; partner development must all be done in advance. Then you turn the focus with creating anticipation among partners and potential customers about the "LAUNCH DAY." Various means are used to countdown to launch day with the hope and expectation of customers lined up, ready to click and buy the product. It can be a very successful approach, but truly requires mapping out to have the correct strategic timeline.

Create Buzz With 'Influentials'

You will want to identify people with influence in your target market. Influentials are those individuals who are experts or first movers for a new trend. This may include industry experts, writers of blogs or newspapers, prominent marketers, government officials or 'creatives' (teens in the know who are 'cool'). Influentials vary by market.

What makes an influential important? The Influentials have the ability, either directly or indirectly, to refer purchasing agents in an organization. Enlisting their help or attracting their attention can give phenomenal momentum to your product and its launch.

So how do you get the Influentials to talk about your product or service?

- Create an event
- Create community
- Joint venture with another marketer who already has the Influentials you want to target
- Make the influential part of your marketing team through an affiliate or joint venture program

Special Events

Having events such as webinars or promotional parties at seminars or trade shows can also increase your connection with the Influentials of your market.

Creating Community

Create a community through the use of forums or blogs. You want to encourage interaction and participation. A great example of community is the *Warrior Internet* marketing forum.

Ask for Advice

Target these influential people by letting them know first about your plans and product. Ask their advice for pricing, promotion and improvements. They can act as an informal panel of advisors or just be the first to hear product announcements. Your hope is they will then tell friends, family and business associates about your product or service.

As you pre-sell to the Influentials, enlist them as affiliates or joint venture partners. Their inclusion will give you the 'stamp' of exclusivity, which can lead to more buzz and other people wanting to join.

Notes

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Putting Buzz and Word-of-Mouth To Work For You

Buzz and word-of-mouth is not a one-time deal. With the interconnections of the Internet and life as we know it today, it is a commitment to implement strategies to encourage people to talk about our products, our services and our brand. By using the extensive reach of the Internet, you can extend your marketing reach across time and space. By providing material through articles, blogs or teleseminars you can encourage buzz both about you and your products.

Try different strategies for encouraging and feeding word of mouth. By doing so, you may find you have reached the level of having BUZZ.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Building Buzz Self-Assessment Questions

1. What strategies will you use to create buzz for your info product?

____
____
____
____
____

2. Where and how will you use these strategies?

____
____
____
____
____

3. How long will it take you to do each of the strategies you listed?

____
____
____
____
____

4. Take a calendar and count back 30-90 days. Now write your schedule for implementing buzz for your product.

____
____
____
____
____

Next . . . Attracting Partners

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Launching With Style

Module 9

Section 4: Attracting Partners

By Reed Floren

Info Product Blueprint was created by
Kenneth A. McArthur

Alysan Delaney-Childs, Project Manager and Editor
Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

Attracting Partners

JV Broker Reed Floren talks about maximizing your launch with JV partners. A professional matchmaker for JV's, Reed will share how to find partners and how to make the relationships work.

What you will learn in this Section:

- How to hire a JV broker
- Types of joint ventures you can form
- Where to find JV partners

Why You Must Have JV Partners to Maximize Your Product Launch

Joint Ventures (JV's) are one of the most powerful tools in any marketer's arsenal. When you joint venture with another marketer you essentially are helping each other out, the power of two or more people is always greater than the power of one.

The 3 Main Types of Joint Ventures for Internet Marketers Today:

Promotion of your product

You can joint venture with a partner and have them promote your product for a set commission (this is very similar to an affiliate program). You might also promote one of your partners products at a later date.

Creation of a new product

You can joint venture with someone and create a whole new website or product. Many of the most successful marketers do this since two minds are better than one and they can both work on their strong suits.

List building

Another popular joint venture is helping one another build each other's list. You could both simply send an email out to your lists and cross-promote one another. You'd get new people from your partners list and they'd go new people from your list.

The difference between partners and affiliates

Generally I don't think there is much of a difference between a joint venture partner and an affiliate, however with a joint venture partners I will spend more time with them and help them maximize their sales. Also joint venture partners will

Notes

generally make you more money since they have bigger lists, a better reputation or they will do additional work to make the promotion a success for them. If you are trying to woo an extremely successful joint venture partner you may want to give him a higher commission rate or even a 100% commission if you are certain that you will be following up with your new list of customers.

How to find JV partners

In my opinion, these are the top places to find JV partners:

Events

Although a marketing event can be expensive to attend you will find your best prospects at an event since you will be able to establish a personal one-on-one relationship right off the bat with someone.

ClickBank

ClickBank is a wonderful place to find JV partners and best of all it's free. Simply go to the ClickBank marketplace at http://marketplace.clickbank.net/ and look for your niche. Then write down their contact information, what their site is and a little about their product or site.

Other affiliate networks

You can also look at other affiliate networks or directories. Simply do a search for them and follow the same steps as outlined for ClickBank.

Directories

Directories such as dmoz.org/ and search.yahoo.com/dir list hundreds if not thousands of sites related to your niche market. You can always work on building a relationship with those sites and see what happens.

Testimonials

Is a similar or complementary product on the market? Then go to their sales letter and look for the people who left testimonials. Many big name marketers leave testimonials and this is a great way to start a relationship.

Search

Run a Google search for your niche and you can find thousands of sites that may be interested.

Notes

How to approach a JV partner

There are many ways to approach a JV partner but what I have found to work well is to try and develop a relationship with them first. You could:

Compliment them

Simply compliment your potential JV partners on a job well done. Perhaps they did a teleseminar and you learned something useful or you like how their website looks. Feed the ego and show genuine interest in someone it pays back a thousand times fold.

Buy one of their products

A popular way of building a relationship with someone is to actually buy their product that way you have a perfect reason to contact them and tell them how great you feel it is.

There are several ways of contacting a potential JV partner, you can:

<u>Email</u>

This is one of the easiest and least time consuming ways of contacting JV partners. However, many of them receive offers via email and most will not respond

<u>Call</u>

A lot of successful JV's are lined up via a phone call. I was asked to write this section after a phone conversation.

<u>Instant Message</u>

If you already have a relationship an instant messenger conversation is an easy way to discuss your joint venture.

<u>Snail Mail</u>

Simply mail them a postcard, a letter or a copy of your product and promotional materials. This can add up very quickly but if you are promoting a big-ticket item this is the way most successful marketers go about acquiring JV's.

Notes

How to get noticed by your potential JV Partners

Be professional, courteous and respectful

In today's world people are extremely busy and pressed for time. You must treat people with respect and contact them in a professional manner. Show interest in what they are doing and explain the benefits of working together.

Offer to help them first

When contacting a potential JV partner offer to help them out. Promote their product to your list.

Create high quality products

If your product isn't high quality, then stop right now and start over. No one wants to ruin their reputation promoting something that is crap.

Write killer sales copy

Learn to write sales copy or hire someone else to write it. If your copy doesn't convert to sales then that partner won't be very interested in working with you in the future.

Provide conversion rates

If you've already launched your product to your list or placed advertisements online for it, then provide the conversion rates so your potential JV partners have an idea of how much money they might make per visitor.

Do the work for them

People are lazy. Sign them up for your affiliate program, provide them with all of the marketing tools they need and bend over backwards for them any way possible.

What do JV partners look for?

Joint venture partners look for high quality products that compliment rather then compete with them. For instance say the potential partner sells an e-book on *How To Build Your List* and you sell a product on *How To Promote Affiliate Programs To Your Lists* then you two aren't directly competing with one another.

Notes

I have found that big ticket items, giveaways (with one-time-offers) and membership sites are easier to get marketers on board with since they can produce a significant amount of income for the marketer with a very small amount of work.

Once you have the JV partner…

Once you have a joint venture partner you will want to do everything for them. From writing the emails they send out, to making sure they have the right link to promote your product to reminding them to actually send out the email.

You will need to be clear and upfront on the compensation they will receive from the sales they generate and preferably provide them with a system that they can login to so they can check their stats.

Pay them on time and if they did a really good job you may want to consider boosting their commissions or providing some sort of bonus so they remain loyal to you.

When and how to use a JV broker (like me) to do the work:

Forming successful joint ventures is not always an easy task and you may want to hire a joint venture broker instead. There are many joint venture brokers you will want to look for one with a good reputation, contacts in your niche and experience with your type of product.

When hiring a joint venture broker stay away from people who charge you on an hourly basis or charge you on a per JV partner basis. You are looking to pay someone a commission on the sales the partners they bring in.

Let's say you are selling a $100 product and you offer a 50% commission to your partners. Your joint venture broker might charge an additional 25% on those sales. You'll be paying out $75 to affiliates and keeping $25 for yourself and you will also be building a list of clients that you would not have had. Plus, now you have the time to work on making follow-up products and more promotional materials to maximize your revenue.

Notes

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Editor Note:

Finding partners is important for every product launch. Your goals may vary, so choose your partner carefully. A joint venture broker can help you find the right partners and manage them during launch which gives you time to maximize your revenue.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Attracting Partners Self-Assessment Questions

1. What do I want as a desired outcome for my product launch?

2. What steps do I need to take to accomplish this?

Next . . . "But Wait There's More…"

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Section 5: “But Wait There’s More…”

Launching With Style

Module 9

By Alysan Delaney-Childs

Info Product Blueprint was created by
Kenneth A. McArthur

Alysan Delaney-Childs, Project Manager and Editor
Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

Section 5

"But Wait There's More…"

Free gift with purchase is one of the oldest marketing techniques going back to the early 1900's. King Gillette used it to sell razors, giving away razor blades. Cracker Jacks popcorn used toys, trinkets and mini books to promote the sale of their product.

What you will learn in this Section:

- Purpose of bonuses
- How to Choose a Bonus
- Where to find bonuses

Infomercials continued the trend with products such as the Ginsu knife ("cut through a nail, a tin can and a radiator hose and *still* slice a tomato paper thin"). As absolute salesmen, the Ginsu guys, Ed Valenti and Barry Becher, realized people buy with emotions and defend with logic.

Valenti and Becher popularized "But wait, there's more," and "How much would you pay" in their calls to action. They understood and used selling psychology by adding eight steak knives, a melon ball gadget, and one other specialty knife. Instead of paying $19.95 for just two knives you received twelve! What a deal! Their bonuses were the nudge to push people into buying immediately as one could only get the additional bonuses if they bought in the following half hour.

Online Use of Bonuses

Today selling online bonuses have become an expected part of selling an info product. Very rarely will you ever see an info product offered for sale without some special bonus attached. In fact for some products, the sheer volume of bonuses often obscures the main product.

What Makes A Bonus Effective?

To determine whether a bonus is effective you have to think like a buyer. They read your headline and determined they are interested, skimmed through the sales letter and are saying, "This looks good… wonder how much it costs?"

As your prospective buyer continues to scroll through your sales letter the buyer comes to the price. And stops…the price is higher than they thought it would be.

But they are still interested so they scroll to your PS or bottom of your letter to see 'The BONUS.'

It's All In The Presentation

The presentation of your bonus is for many buyers a defining moment. This is where they make the decision of buy vs. not

Notes

buy. Is your bonus unique? Does it add extra value to the original offer? Is it something they want? (In addition to your product?)

The packaging and promotion of your bonus in your sales letter is as important as the description of your product. So take the time to describe and present your bonus as carefully as you did your product. Using features and benefits statements to add increased value to your original product. (A feature is what the product has. A benefit is what the product does for your customer.)

You want your potential customer to know the value of the bonuses they will receive with purchase. Listing a suggested sales price or value for each of the bonus parts can have your visitor starting to add up the cost of the bonuses vs. the sales price of the product. When value overcomes the mental sticking point of price you have a sale.

Limiting the number of high value bonuses can help buyers who hesitate make an immediate buying decision. This is why you will see 'x' number of special bonuses offered particularly in high-ticket product launches. The number pushes people to make a decision.

One jvAlert member told me she was ready, credit card in hand for an early morning kick-off because she wanted one of the 3 top bonuses. The credit card processor was slow and she nearly didn't get the bonus. She was number 3. She was up for an early am kickoff and was motivated to buy. Your buyers can be encouraged in the same way with high value bonuses.

How Do You Choose A Bonus?

A bonus can actually harm your sales and give less than anticipated results if it fails to appeal to your visitor or is seen as been of low perceived value.

Some guidelines to use:

- Does it add value?
- Is it relevant?
- Is it of equal value of your primary product?
- Is it a list of 'stuff' no one would want?

Value Is Determined By the Buyer

When building your bonus package you want products, e-books, software that are valuable to the buyer. Offering large numbers of bonuses for a small amount can start the prospective buyer questioning the entire package including your product.

Notes

I've seen offers of an e-book with 50 other e-books and reports for $29.95. The stated value of the e-books was in excess of $500. Well, if that was the case, why was the product selling for $29.95? It makes the buyer question the overall value of your offer. In most cases it will not enhance but actually detract from your sales.

If you offer a bonus that increases the value of your product, then you can increase sales through its promotion. A good offline example of this is Sports Illustrated magazine's Swimsuit Edition. The Swimsuit Edition is an added bonus and for many subscribers may be the primary reason they buy a subscription.

Make it attractive. If you have spent the time, money and effort in graphics and presentation for your product, do the same for your bonuses. It goes back to value. If everything looks good there is a higher perceived value. With a higher value you make it easier for the customer to say, "Yes," and buy.

Is The Bonus Relevant?

When developing your bonus package make sure your bonuses are related to subject or content area of your info product.

With an info product on improving your golf swing, adding a Holiday Cookie Baking e-book would not be a good match. E-books on choosing clubs or golf destination vacations are a much better fit for your product. You don't want people going, "Huh?" when reading your bonus list. The "Huh" reaction makes your reader question if what's inside your product is really what they want. Choose carefully and avoid planting the seed of doubt in your potential buyer's mind.

Is Value Similar?

Similar value is really a quality issue. When people review your sales letter and see what is being offered or open the box with the physical product in it, do the product and bonuses match?

Is the skill and quality of the graphics and presentation of your product similar to your bonuses? You set an expectation of what the value is for your product. People expect the same or close to that same quality level.

For example with a physical product, if you have the CDs in a DVD case with an imprinted graphic cover, bonus CD's should be packaged the same way. I received a physical product recently with the CD's nicely packaged in the DVD case with gorgeous graphics. The bonus CD's? In a padded mail envelope with an Avery file label on the outside. Was I impressed? No, it seemed like the seller was cleaning out their garage and threw this in the box. The bonus CD packaging decreased the overall value in my mind.

Notes

If you are depending on affiliates and partners for your bonuses, then be careful and choosy when adding the bonuses to your package. If the bonus isn't of the same quality as what you are offering, politely decline the bonus. When the buyer downloads the product or opens the box, they see you and your product. The low quality bonus becomes your bonus and a reflection of you, so be careful. It's your reputation and your business on the line.

Is It A List of 'Stuff" No One Wants

Ever seen the bonus list with e-books, software and articles that have been around so long, you just want to yawn and say, "Boring"? Adding bonuses does not mean cleaning your hard drive of all those e-books from three years ago. Some may still be valuable, but the lifespan of many things on the Internet is short. Keep things fresh and appealing to your buyer. Some bonuses have been included in offers so often they have little or no value.

Where Do You Find Bonuses To Offer?

Do It Yourself

There are many resources for bonuses. You can add a special or complimentary report you write for your product. One advantage of do-it-yourself bonuses is that it adds to your brand and your image as the expert. Alex Mandossian suggests adding a guide to teach the buyer how to consume or use your product. You can do an audio presentation and offer as an MP3 download or an e-book. A checklist or teleseminar can also be added.

Fred Gleek suggests offering a free coaching session. He has found a free consultation to be of high-perceived value, but one that few people actually use.

Other Sources

In the module on Content Development we talked about using public domain and private label rights works as ways of developing products. You can also use these techniques when developing bonuses.

Partners and affiliates can also be a good resource for bonuses. Carefully choose the bonus so it enhances not detracts from your product. In addition, approach other Internet marketers with similar products or a slightly different angle than you have used. Ask if they would be willing to add a bonus to your package. It can be a win-win for you both. They get visibility and you get a bonus.

If you are going to use someone else's e-book as a bonus, please get their permission to do so.

Notes

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Determining Your Bonuses

Bonuses can provide reassurance of value and nudge your visitor toward buying.

When deciding on your bonus make it attractive, make it relevant and make it valuable.

Bonuses add up to more sales for you, your partners and affiliates. Most of all, you'll have a happy customer who knows they got a great deal.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"But Wait There's More…" Self-Assessment Questions

1. What bonuses will you include with your product?

2. Who will you ask to contribute bonuses?

3. Are the bonuses you are considering:
   - Relevant
   - Attractive
   - Similar value to your product

Next . . . Growing The List

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Launching With Style

Module 9

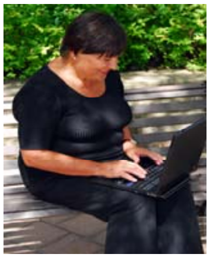
Section 6: Growing The List

By Brian Edmondson

Info Product Blueprint was created by
Kenneth A. McArthur

Alysan Delaney-Childs, Project Manager and Editor
Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

Growing The List



Building a list is critical to having a successful online business. One of the most successful people at developing and maintaining a profitable list is Brian Edmondson of ListProfitAcademy.com. He shares his strategies for not only building but maintaining a profitable list.

What you will learn in this Section:

- How to develop a personal relationship with your list.
- How initial building strategies define whether your list will be profitable or not
- The best techniques for list building
- How relationship marketing can build a profitable list
- Using email to maintain a relationship with your list

It is very important you know how to build a list and more importantly make a profit from it. You can create the best information product in the world, but if you do not have a list, a profitable list, you'll never sell even one single copy.

Now that may not be entirely true. Yes, you could advertise and you could do the lead generation. You could do all forms of marketing and advertising. However, it's a lot simpler, easier and cheaper to market and sell your product to your existing customer database.

I'm just going to talk about building and profiting from a list in general. But we're actually going to get really specific and go into relationship marketing. The bottom line is you could build a list, a huge list, but if you don't build a relationship it won't work. If you don't have that reason for them to know, like and trust you, then they're probably not going to do business with you. So it's important that you build a personal relationship with your list as well.

The Building of Your List Will Determine Your List Profitability

The first thing I want to talk to you about is how to build a list. Now this is where a lot of people get it wrong because you know the old saying "You've made your bed and now you have to sleep in it"? Well it's kind of the same thing with our lists. You make your list and then you have to profit from it or not profit from it depending upon how you made it.

When you're building your list, begin with the end in mind. Now what do I mean by that? What I mean is that when you're building your list you have to think before you build your list.

Notes

- What kind of prospects do I want on my list?
- What kinds of potential customer or customers do I want on my list?
- Do I want someone that knows me, likes me and trust me?
- Or do I want someone who doesn't know me, doesn't like me and doesn't trust me?
- Do I want someone who is going to spend money with me?
- Or do I want someone who is not going to spend money with me?
- Do I want someone who has a proven buyer and is likely to buy things on the Internet?
- Or do I want someone who is not a proven buyer and is scared to death to make purchases on the Internet?

Now these questions are kind of rhetorical. It's obvious what the answer is. You want a prospect on the list that knows you, likes you and trusts you. You want someone who is a proven buyer. You want someone who is going to spend money. You want someone who has a track record of buying products on the Internet. That's the kind of person you want on your list.

What About Freebie Seekers?

Now it's okay to get freebie seekers on your list. Maybe you give something away free as a lead generation device, and that's fine. But you can control the process of how someone gets on your list and how you bring them through your entire marketing funnel to eventually spend money with you. You want to avoid wasting a lot of time doing things to build lists that aren't going to make any money.

Build An Optimized Opt-In List

The point I'm trying to make here is to begin with the end in mind. We want a list that I refer to as an optimized opt-in list. I want an opt-in list of someone who is potentially going to spend money with me, a proven buyer, not just a freebie seeking tire kicker. I want someone who will eventually through the relationship that I build with them

- know me,
- like me, and
- trust me.

What kind of prospect or customer do you want on your list and what are you doing to attract people onto your list? Are you doing the things that will attract the people that you want on your list or are you just trying to attract as many people as possible onto your list? If you want to do that, that's fine.

Notes

That's not what I do. You'll see that my methods, I think, work a little bit better in terms of having a hyper responsive list. I'll talk to you about some numbers down the road. I typically make five to 15 times the industry average and make more money with a list of about 1500 people than marketers with a list of hundreds of thousands of people make. We'll talk about what I do and what you can do in your marketing to see similar types of results. So began with the end in mind.

Forget What You've Heard: The Money Is Not In Your List

One of the things that I frequently hear is. 'The money is in the list, the money is in the list.' That's not entirely true. I know a lot of people with very large lists that don't make any money so apparently there is no money in their list. I know people who have very large lists that don't make a lot of money and I know people with very small lists that make a lot of money. I know someone who has a 100% opt in list that's generated close to $100,000 in one month. I know some people who have list of millions of people who don't make any money a month. So list size does not matter.

The money is not in the list and list size does not matter. The money is in the relationship with your list. I'm going to talk specifically about relationship marketing and what things you can do starting today to build your list. Also what you can do to build a relationship so that the money can be in your list.

Let me give you some quick numbers. In Internet marketing, the average amount of money most people make per subscriber, per month is $.50 to one dollar. So what that means is if you have a thousand people on your list, on average you'll make $.50 to a dollar per person per month so you would make $500-$1000 per month for the thousand person opt in list. If you had 10,000 people on your list, then you'd make anywhere from on average $5,000-$10,000 per month.

With the results that I'm about to teach you, I consistently on average make anywhere from $2.50 to five dollars per subscriber per month and I have sometimes made up to over $15 per subscriber per month. So that's on average about five to 15 times the industry average. So once again, that makes the point that the money isn't necessarily in the size of the list and that the money isn't necessarily in the list, ***but in your relationship with your list.***

List Building Techniques

Let's talk about building a personal relationship with your list. Here's some of the things I do.

Notes

- Advertise in e-zines,
- Do lead generation type advertising,
- Participate in book promotions and giveaways, what I call bonus type of advertising,
- Work with JV partners, people who are professional competitors. You can become partners with them.

Newsletter Example

Let's take an example of the newsletter. Let's say I was a very staunch Republican and I wrote a newsletter that related a lot to conservative issues. What I would do and what I would want to attract my newsletter were people that were like me or wanted to be like me with similar ideas and similar values. I want people for the most part who would tend to agree with what I said.

What I wouldn't do is advertise in a Democratic or liberal publication to get subscribers. It would be a waste of money and a waste of time for me to do that. I don't want people like that on my list. I want people who will know me, like me and trust me. I want people that will be on the same page as I am, on the same wavelength. I would advertise in publications that were geared towards conservatives and Republicans and attract those kinds of people.

Diet Example

The same thing applies in any industry. Say I'm in the fitness industry and I've developed a diet similar to the South Beach diet. There are people out there who subscribe to all sorts of newsletters and publications and buy products related to the South Beach diet.

Now I have a diet that is similar to that. There might be some variations. I might have a twist, but for the most part it's very similar to the South Beach diet. It's not like, the Zone diet. Say hypothetically the Zone diet is completely different than the South Beach diet. So what I would not do is advertise or develop lead generation and publications that are geared toward the Zone diet because those people, they're already in the mindset that the Zone diet is the way things should be.

I'm not going to waste my time trying to change their minds and convert them over to my variation of the South Beach diet. What I want to do is I want to advertise in publications are geared towards the South Beach diet and attract people who already believe in the South Beach diet to listen to what I have to say. The South Beach diet people are more likely to listen to what I have to say. They are more likely to agree with me because are similar, like-minded, have the same values, and the same beliefs.

Notes

That really applies in any industry. I'm sure that because you are interested in that area or niche, you subscribe to some newsletters, publications, and journals related to your interest. You continue to subscribe because you agree with the publisher, writer, editor or company says. I'm sure there are a lot of other publications that you don't really care for, and what they're saying about your niche. So when you're going to start doing some advertising and lead generation to build your list, it is highly recommended that you advertise in the publications that you already like.

In Relationship Marketing You Are The Product

The important part here is relationship marketing because it's you that they're buying. It's not a separate product you've created that they're buying. I'm sure you've created a great product, but what they are really buying is you and the relationship they have with you. That ‘you’ is going to come across in all of your emails, all of your marketing materials, and pretty much everything you do.

So isn't it safe to say that if you subscribe to a certain newsletter or a certain e-zine and you like the publisher of that e-zine, isn't it safe to say that all of the other people who subscribe to that same e-zine, that same magazine, that same journal, that they like the publisher, too?

Isn't it also safe to say and take it to the next step, that if you like that particular e-zine and that other people who subscribe to that e-zine like that e-zine, that if they come onto your e-zine that they will like you? Doesn't that make sense?

Don’t Market to People You Don’t Like

Doesn't it make sense that if there are other publications out there or places where advertising is conducted that you don't like and if you try to market to those people and bring them into your marketing funnel those people won’t like you or your information?

Isn't it safe to say that if you don't like that source of traffic, you probably don't like the people who are there? If you pay money to bring them into your e-zine they're not going to like you and they're not going to like what you have to say? So don't waste your money. Don't do try to get those people as subscribers.

My Secret to Successful Advertising

That's the biggest secret to my e-zine advertising, any type of marketing that I do. If I'm doing off-line marketing and magazines, I'll only advertise in magazines that I buy personally at the newsstands on a routine basis that I like.

Notes

If I buy a magazine and I don't like the magazine or it's junk, I'm probably not going to buy it again. I won't advertise in it because I don't like it. There are people out there that like it, well they like it and I don't like it, so we're not probably going to mesh.

Building or list and profiting from it is like making your bed and sleeping in it. You made your list and now you have to either profit from it or not profit from it. If you did things wrong in the beginning:

- You attracted a bunch of junk type freebie seekers onto your list,
- You attracted a bunch of people who don't agree with you on to your list
- And you attracted a bunch of people who are not like you onto your list.

Well, they're probably not going to notice you. They're not going to like you. They're not going to trust you. You're not going to build a relationship with them. And you're ***not going to make any money.***

Build to Profit

Build your list with the end in mind. Who do you want on your list?

- people like you,
- or people who want to be like you.

You want to find people who are eventually going to know you, like you and trust you through the relationship that you built with them.

Build Trust

'Be yourself,' that has to come across in your marketing. If you do that, you will attract people who are like you and like you as a person. If they like you they are more likely to make purchases based on your recommendations. They will buy products and service you either create yourself or that you recommend through affiliate marketing.

There are six things that I do to make my emails personal and six things that I do to build a relationship with my list that has allowed me to make five to 15 times what the industry average is with my email marketing and what you can do also. These are things that you can do right away and implement immediately. Then finally I want to talk about the most important part of your emails, and it's not the subject line. With sales letters they say the headlines are the most important part in advertising. A lot of people say in email marketing is that the

Notes

subject line is the most important thing, but it's not. We're going to talk about what is and it's all going to come together.

Three Most Important Things in Email Marketing

Let's talk about the three most important things in email marketing, the three most important things that you can do to build a relationship with your list.

- Make your emails personal.
- Make your emails personal.
- Make your emails personal.

That sounds silly, doesn't it? You know what though, it does, but it's kind of like real estate. What are the three most important things in real estate? Location, location, location. I can't emphasize this enough. The most important thing that you can do you in any marketing, including email marketing, is build a personal relationship with your list.

Remember, the money is not in the list; the money is in your relationship with your list. I said that you could create the best product in the world. You know what? There are a lot of things that you can do. You can create the best product in the world. You can create the fastest product in the world. You can create the cheapest one, you can do it at better quality, and you can do it quicker.

But no matter what, down the road, somebody will always do it cheaper. Somebody will always do it faster. Somebody will always give better quality. Somebody will always give better value, and there's nothing you can do that somebody else can't do.

There's nothing you can do that can't be replaced. Please, don't take that personally. That's not a personal attack on you. It applies to everybody. It applies to me. It applies to you, and it applies to Bill Gates and Microsoft. There's always going to be someone else out there. There's always going to be a competitor out there.

There's one thing that you can have with your prospects and your customers that nobody else can have. That's your personal relationship with them. The relationship that my prospects and my customers have with me, nobody can replace. Yes, they can go and have relationships with other people. But they can't have that same relationship with me because there is only one Brian Edmondson. There is only one Ken McArthur and there is only one you.

That's why it is so important that you build that personal relationship because that's really what it comes down to. You

Notes

can learn all of the techniques out there to build your list, you can learn 101 different ways to build your list, e-zine advertising, joint ventures, podcasting, blogging, search engine optimization, email marketing, Internet marketing, offline marketing, classified ads and television commercials.

You can do a million things to build your list. But once you build that list it doesn't mean you're going to make any money. The most important thing that you're going to do is build that relationship with your list and that's what's going to keep customers coming back and doing business with you. That's why we're going to talk about relationship marketing because that's one thing a lot of people miss and that's why a lot of people don't really make money, especially on the Internet. I hope I made that point clear. The most important thing is making your emails personal.

You're Not Back in English 101

Now were going to talk about six things that I do to make my emails personal and six things that you can do to make your emails personal to build a personal relationship with your list. The first thing I do is make all of my emails informal. Were not trying to be communications experts. We're not taking English classes in college. We're certainly not working for big Fortune 500 companies where we need to send professional memos with a 'To' and 'From.' "This is a note from senior management telling you that..." that's nonsense, that's ridiculous.

We're writing letters and emails like we're writing to our friends, our family, *real personal*. That's the kind of text that I use. When I'm writing an email I've write an email as if I'm writing a letter to my mom or my best friend in college.

How do you usually would start emails that you write to your friends or instant messages when you're talking online? "Hi mom," or "Hi Brian," not "Dear" or "To Whom It May Concern," that's ridiculous. Don't ever start an email that way. Just start off very informally, "Hi first name," whatever the first name of your prospect is or customer is.

Keep It Casual and Informal

Then go in and just talk to them informally. Don't use corporate mumbo-jumbo type of speech, just write casually. Say for instance, I'm writing about a new product that just came out. I just created the info product and I'm ready to write a letter about it. I wouldn't write a letter saying, "Dear Sir, the reason why I'm writing this letter to you is to inform you that I've just created the newest product on XYZ and here are the benefits to you." No, that's crazy.

Notes

The letter goes like this. "Hi first name, how are you doing? I know it's been a while since you've heard from me but I've been working really hard behind the scenes to create a really great product. I want to tell you about it. Let me tell you what I put into this." Very informal, very personal.

The Talk Show Model for Promotion

I use what's kind of called a talk show model. Have you ever watched *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno or *Late Night* with Conan O'Brien? What they do is they get up and they do a monologue and then they go into the interview with guests or they are promoting. The guests that come on the show, what are they doing? There are promoting products; they're promoting movies or whatever. But what they do is they come on the talk show and they start out having a nice conversation. "Oh, so what have you been up to? How are things going with your personal life? What are you doing?" Then they go into the pitch for the movie they are promoting or the product that they are promoting.

Increase Your Reach With Personalization

You should do the same with your emails. Every and all you send, update people on your personal life and let them know what's going on. Let them know what you been doing. Let them know what happened last night. Did you do a football game? Did your favorite baseball team lose a game last night or today when? What are your kids doing? Did your two-year-old finally start walking? Was it you and your wife's anniversary? Did you go out to a nice fancy dinner? Let them into your personal life and really start to build a relationship with them. Some make it informal and use that talk show model. First, make a personal and then go into the pitch, go into the product, go into the sales. So always start with a personal touch.

I'll say, "Hi first name, how are you doing? It's been a long week for me. Here's what I've done. I went to a really good concert last night." I'm just kind of thinking of this as I'm going along, and having a conversation with you. It's not all formal. But were having a conversation and it's very informal, but yet I'm still delivering to you great content.

If I were selling something, we'd do the same thing. We'd make it very informal, build a personal relationship, and I go through the offer if I had an offer for you.

Attention: There Is A Real Live Person Behind This Website

The second thing that you want to talk about, which I'm very adamant about, is please take the time to interact with your

Notes

customers and respond to their emails. Please respond to your prospects' and your customers' emails.

One thing that amazes me about email marketing and Internet marketing is that there are a lot of people that get involved with that and think that the rules of the off-line world do not apply in the online world. The fact is that nothing could be further from the truth. That's one of the reasons why I keep emphasizing relationships over and over again. Just because you're behind a computer and your reading an email, doesn't mean that you're not going to have a personal relationship. It's just like going back to how sales for started in the old days, with door-to-door selling. Now were at the age were we're behind computers with email, but you still have to have that personal relationship.

Imagine this scenario. Imagine this for one minute. You are getting ready to buy a high end product, a $1000 camcorder. You go into the local Best Buy or Circuit City. You did your research, you do your homework and you are just about ready to buy that camera, but you just had a couple of questions about it. Maybe you want to be sure that it does feature XYZ or you're getting ready to buy one of two cameras and you're just wanting to see what the differences are. So you walk up to the salesperson and you say, "Excuse me, I'm thinking about buying this camcorder but I just want to make sure it does XYZ. Can you tell me if it does XYZ?" After you ask the question the salesperson just stands there and ignores you, doesn't respond. Will you say, that's strange; maybe he didn't hear me see you ask the question again. "Excuse me, I'm thinking about buying this camcorder but I just want to know, does it do XYZ?" And he just stands there and he ignores you. What would you do? I don't know about you, but I probably would not buy the camcorder and I'd walk out of the store. I think that would be absolutely ridiculous if the salesperson that is trying to sell his product ignored me when I had a question about it. Yet in the online world I see it happening all of the time. Whether I'm buying a $27 product or a $1000 product, I see it happening over and over again and it really baffles my mind. If I'm going to take the time and spend $1000 on a product and I have a small question about it and I said the person and email and they can't take the time to respond to an email and answer a question? Do you think they're going to get the sale? Absolutely not.

How does that make me feel? How confidant am I that this is a legitimate business and there's actually a person behind there? If I'm asking them a question about a sale and they won't answer it, what if I bought the product and I can't download it or what if there's some kind of a problem with it or I need some kind of technical support, or what if in worst case scenario, I want a refund. How confident am I that that is going to happen, that any of that is going to happen if they won't even answer my email to sell me the product?

Notes

Keep The Communication Lines Open

Please take the time to respond to your customers' emails and not just for the fact that they need the confidence to know that somebody's there. Every time you respond to your customers' emails you strengthen that relationship you have with them. Even if they don't have a question about buying your product.

Say you wrote an email and they just wanted to comment on it, "Hey Brian. That was a great email you wrote the other day. I had a similar experience that you did." Take the time to respond and say, "Wow, that's neat." Write back and say, "Thank you. Thank you for sending me a comment about my newsletter and I appreciate the fact that you're reading it. Thank you for sending me a comment about the sales letter for my product. I'm glad you read it and I'm glad you are considering it." Just doing something small like that, that little, can really strengthen that relationship do you have with your customers and your potential customers. Take the time to interact and respond to your customer's emails.

No Time? No Excuse!

One of the biggest excuses I hear people not answering emails is they don't have enough time. They have so many emails and they are just bombarded all day. Well you know what? That just doesn't cut it. If you are so busy that you can't take the time to personally respond to your emails, outsource it.

Well, if your customer likes you and has a question, make sure you respond to it. If you are so busy that you cannot do it yourself that outsource it. It is not that expensive to outsource. As your business grows, maybe you can have interns for free that will do that for you. Make sure that your emails get answered. Take the time to respond to your emails personally

Outsource a help desk. I'm sure there are a lot of emails that you are going to get our very similarly asked questions, or very frequently asked questions, or they might just be emails to say, "Hey, I read your email and thought it was kind of neat" or "I read your latest issue and I don't agree with a word you're saying." Have a standard response from the help desk you outsource. Give guidelines or answer yourself; if it's a one time only asked question. If someone sends you a nice comment about your latest issue, have him or her respond by saying, "Oh, thank you. I appreciate that." Just respond to the emails. If you're so busy that you can do it yourself, take the time to respond to it.

Only Recommend What You Use

The third thing I do is I only promote and recommend things that I personally use myself or that I can personally vouch for.

Notes

Now you're saying, “That makes sense.” Why would I do that? Well that's another way that you build a personal relationship with your list because you are going to be communicating with your list and you're going to be leading them into your life and into your business.

So if you actually use something yourself and it affected you positively, well now you have a story that you can tell them. Not just generically speaking about the product, not "Oh, there's a great new product, and if you use it you can increase your sales by two or three times," or "Here's a great new product and if you use it you can lose 10 pounds in 30 days." That's very generic. That's not very personal.

But if you use the product yourself, you can give it a personal recommendation, your personal touch. "There's a product that I have just used and I personally use it in my own business and it has increased my profits by two fold in the last month." That's very personal. "Here is a weight-loss product that I have used for the last month and I have personally lost 7 pounds on it."

Another thing that I see people doing, especially in affiliate marketing agreement if they just copy and paste the same generic email over and over and over. I'll get 20 emails in that day that all say the same thing with the same subject lines. You know the people have not used the product themselves. They probably don't even know what it does. They're just copying and pasting a generic email. Don't do that.

It makes it much more believable, much more credible and people are much more likely to make a purchase decision on a recommendation that comes for me personally. Once again, if you use something yourself and you share your personal story with your list; you're building a personal relationship.

Offer Something Free Not Only Offers For Products

A fourth thing that you can do, and this is what I was going to say earlier on but I didn't so here we are. The fourth thing you can do is that you can offer great value or free value and not always promote your list this is something that I see marketers do all of the time and it really bugs me. I know they don't do as well as others who don't do this.

What am I talking about? What I'm talking about is constantly sending offers down to your list to promote, every single day sending them offer after offer after offer, where it is obvious that you don't use the product yourself. How can you possibly constantly use product after product after product and refer, refer, refer and recommend, recommend, recommend?

Notes

Being Open and Approachable

Notes

Also, remember how I talked about building a personal relationship with your list? Let me give you an example of that, and how I don't always send offers to my list. Recently I was out at a marketing seminar with a bunch of other Internet marketers and we went out to dinner that night.

We went out to a sushi bar. It was the first time in my life that I've ever had sushi. So the next day we got back and I wrote an email to my list and I said, “Hey, I'm at the Internet marketing seminar. When I get back from that I'll give you a report of some of the things I learned. I just wanted to use something neat. I went out for sushi last night and it was the strangest thing. I really liked it." Basically I just told them what I did the night before.

So the next day some of the marketers at that seminar said, "Brian, I just got the email that you send out to your list. All you did was tell them about how you went out and had sushi last night. You weren’t selling anything, there was no offer. What are you doing? How are you making money?

So I said, “Well there was no offer and in that email. I just wanted to send an email to my list. I just wanted to let them know where I was at and what I was up to. I wanted to share that with them.” They couldn’t believe that I would do that, that I would send an email out with no offer.

They just don't get it. I explained to them but my sending emails to my list telling them that I ate sushi last night is the reason why I make $5-$15 per subscriber per month and not $.50 to one dollar per subscriber per month. I had a ton of emails from all over the world from my list members who either love sushi or hate sushi and had to comment about it. I wrote them back and we got a little dialogue going. It just strengthened that relationship with my list. It built that relationship because of that personal correspondence. And those people, believe it or not, are more likely to do business with me because of that. So something small, and what might seem small in silly to most people on the outside and a lot of those marketers at the seminar, well, it makes a big difference in the end.

Occasionally send emails to your list. Just make it personal, let them into your life. Symptoms of free information or some free content and don't always send them offers.

Make Choice a Part of Your Hard Sell Strategy

Another quick strategy that I want to talk about is that if I'm going to be doing a hard sell, if I'm really trying to promote something in an email, what I'll do in the email is I won't write the entire email to sell it. What I'll do is create a sales letter on a webpage and then when I do the email, the email will be short. The email will start, once again, with a personal touch. All emails start with a personal touch. I'll say, "Oh and by the way, there is also this product that you might be interested in. Check it out at this link." Then I direct them to the webpage.

Whether we like it or not, there is going to come a point where sometimes people are in a bad mood or they're having a bad day or they just don't want to be marketed to that day. Or they just for some reason they decide they no longer want to be on your list.

Well, if you send them a long email and the email is doing nothing but promote, promote, promote, then when they get to the end of that email they might hit that unsubscribe button. But if you send them to a webpage, well you're not forcing that marketing message; they voluntarily chose to receive that marketing message by clicking on that link. They go to the link. They see the marketing message. If they're not interested, that's fine; they close the webpage and probably just delete your email. They volunteered to receive that marketing message. It was not forced on them in an email.

Survey Your List to Determine Wanted Products

The fifth thing that I do to build a personal relationship with my list and profit from it is I survey my list. I frequently set my lists surveys to find out what they want to hear about. I asked him what some of the questions they have are and I asked them what types of products they want me to bring to them.

Once again, this is the Info Product Blueprint and we are in the business of creating information products. So what is the best type of information product you can create? That's the question. What is the best type of information product you can create? The answer? The type that your list wants to buy.

What kind of information product is your list want to buy? I don't know, ask them. Seriously, survey your list and ask them what they want. Believe it or not, my current website is ListProfitAcademy.com. It's a website that focuses on how to build and how to profit from a list and since I created a website I went on to speak to a lot of people about building a list and profiting from it. Here I am with Info Product Blueprint doing that with you guys. That wasn't my original plan, believe it or not.

Notes

Notes

Listen To Your List To Develop Wanted Products

When I was first describing what type of products I wanted to create or what type of websites I wanted to create, I had a completely different idea in mind. I was working on that for quite a while. Then I came to a point where I said, "You know what? Is this something that my list would really want to hear about? Is it something they would want to buy?"

So I did a survey with my list and I asked them, "What do you want to learn about? What do you want to hear about?" It actually turned out that the number one thing that my list to learn about was how to build a list and profit from it. Specifically, they wanted to know how to make big money from a small list, which is something that I've been able to do in the past. That's what they wanted to learn about and that's what I brought to them.

Of course, by serving them and asking them what they want and bringing it to them, it doesn't get any more personal than that. You told me this is what you wanted and here it is. Now buy it, seriously, buy it.

That's a great way to survey your list. Ask them questions and it's a great way to build a relationship with them. It lets them know that you want to hear what their questions are and that you really want to know what they want and you want to bring it to them. If you are the person that can bring people what they want, you're going to do a lot better in information marketing than others who just constantly create products that they want to create that they don't really care whether people want to hear about that or not. Survey your list and ask them questions.

E-zine Your Way to List Success

Another great thing is that's a great way to build content for your e-zine. Remember something that we talked about earlier on was don't always send offers to your list. Send them some free content, send them some valuable information. Some of the best information that you can send your list is information that they want to know about. So ask your list what are some of the most burning questions. A lot of people from your list will send you a question and then you can create content based on that. Here is a question that so-and-so asked and here is my answer. He gets your list involved because they know that you’re answering their questions. Especially if you do this on a weekly basis, the one person whose question that to answer, they are going to be really happy because they're getting that kind of highlighted treatment. "Wow, Brian actually wrote about me in his newsletter,” and that really strengthens that bond that you have with them and they're going to be more likely to read newsletters. The more people that read your newsletter, the more that will act on the recommendations that you make and more money that you will make. Isn't that what we're all here for, to make money? So survey your list and ask them questions to build content and also decide what types of products and services you should be creating.

Using Multimedia To Connect With Your List

The sixth thing that I want to talk about on how to build a personal relationship with your list is to use multimedia. Remember earlier on I mentioned how in the old days things would work to do or and then we went into retail stores and now a lot of us do marketing just behind the computer through email and a lot of people think that because they are behind the computer the rules of the off-line world don't apply to the online world? Nothing could be further from the truth.

Will one of the things that you want to do to build a personal relationship with your list is to use multimedia to reach them in other ways than email. You see, there is a big difference between sending somebody in now versus talking to them and meeting with them in person. Now those are two extreme examples, emailing someone versus meeting them in person. There are a lot of things that you can do in between those two things to really strengthen your relationship with your list and to get them to know you, like you and trust you more and a lot of that you can use multimedia.

What types of multimedia can you use? Instead of always just doing email marketing you can also do teleseminars. Teleseminars are a great way to further your sales process, to get people to know you better, and to add an additional stream of income to your business. With your Info Product Blueprint, you can do a teleseminar and explain to people more about what your product is about and how it is going to benefit than. When people get on a teleseminar they get to hear your voice, they get closer to you instead of just reading an email, which is just black text on a screen, they get to hear your voice. That is another way they can become closer to you and get to really know who you are.

Another way is to use video. In a video your interaction with me is a lot different than if you just signed up for my newsletter and received the email newsletter from me. In a video you get to see me, see what I look like. You get to hear me talk to you and this is really creating a closer bond, almost like we're meeting a person. It does a lot more to strengthen that relationship than the type I would have with you through email only. I've used multimedia teleseminars, audio, mp3's, videos.

So use multimedia, don't just use email, email marketing, don't just use websites. Use audio, put audio on your websites, put

Notes

video on your websites, do teleseminars and if possible, actually meet people in person. That will work very well.

Meet In Person and Connect

The best way, the best form of relationship marketing is to meet people in person. How do you do that? What you do is you go to seminars, trade shows, conventions, events, anything related to your industry or your niche. No matter what you were doing that there is a market for it. There are trade shows, events and seminars related to that niche market.

What is important about that is there are two people, two types of people that you can meet in person. You can meet your potential customers and prospects and you can also meet your competitors and your potential business partners.

In information marketing and Internet marketing, email marketing, the two most important relationships that you'll ever have is one with your customers and one with your partners. Everything that we have talked about tonight in terms of building relationships were prospects for customers, that can apply to your partners, your potential JV partners and your competitors as well. Don't look to your competition as competitors, especially in information marketing. There are a lot of things that you can do to work together with others.

Email Success

Finally, I want to talk about the most important part of your email and it is not the subject line. That don't get me wrong, the subject line is a very important part of your email. Matter of fact, it is the second most important part of your email, but the most important part of your email is not the subject line. It's the 'From' line. From Brian T. Edmondson, From Kenneth McArthur, from your name.

You see, I'm sure that you get emails from your friends, from your family, from your employers, from government agencies. There are important people that you get emails from and I'm sure that no matter what the subject line is those emails get opened. I'm sure that if your mother or your brother or your best friend sent an email, is it safe to say that you're going to open an email matter what? No matter what the subject line says you're going to open an email from a family member or friend.

Now, the subject line could determine the speed at which you open an email. Say you're in a hurry to rush out and you don't have time to read your emails, and you see that yes, there is an email from your mother. You will open that email, but you're probably not going to open it right now. But if the email said in the subject line, 'Brian, your father passed away," you would open that email immediately because that's an important

Notes

subject line.

So the subject line is important. The subject line can control the urgency at which customers and your prospects open an email, but the most important part is the 'From' line. You should develop the relationship with your prospects so that when they get an email from you, that email would be opened no matter what.

I am on an awful lot of email lists and I get a lot of emails every day. There are certain people; there are certain newsletters that I subscribe to that I will always open the email from that person that matter what the subject line says, no matter what, because I love what they write. I love what they say.

They really build that relationship with me where I want to receive emails from them. There are other emails that I will just delete and I will never read unless the subject line is really compelling, because I don't really have that personal relationship with that person. They just really have not done a good job of making sure that I want to open their emails. Maybe I know that every time they send an email they're just selling something and I really just don't want to see what is being sold today.

Then there are other people who I never open their emails and that's not a good thing, no matter what the subject line is. You certainly do not want to be in that category. If you do everything that we talked about and…

- You build that personal relationship with your list,
- You make your emails informal,
- You don't always throw offers down their throat,
- You build your relationship with them through other means than just email marketing such as audio, video and
- You give them free valuable content on occasion.

If you do these things, then you should be able to build a relationship with them so that they will always open an email that comes from you.

But the point is that you should not have to worry about how to trick people and you should not have to worry about how to be cute and clever just to get your emails opened. Your emails should be opened always because they come from you. If you do a good job with relationship marketing, that will happen, that will always happen.

That's why it's so important, and isn't it safe to say, that the more people that open your emails, the more people are going to read your emails, the more people that are going to act on the recommendations, the more people that are going to buy your information products and the more money you going to

Notes

make. That is the importance of relationship marketing and email marketing.
So let's wrap up some of the things that we talked about.

First of all we talked about beginning with the end in mind. What kind of customer do we want on our list? What kind of prospect do we want on our list? We can control the process of bringing that person through our list. Initially yes, it is okay to get a freebie seeker on our list. Through the methods that we use to build our relationship with them and through the process of getting them to know us, like us and trust us they will eventually become a paying customer and they will be more likely to stay on list, because remember we attracted that person from sources that are congruent with the type of person that we are in the type of person that we want on our list. If that person does not like you, they will be quick to unsubscribe and that's fine. We did not want them our list to begin with.

Don't Worry About Unsubscribe Rates

I really don't look at my unsubscribe rates. I know every time I send out an email, people are going to unsubscribe. I know that a lot of times people come on the list may be to get something free that I'm offering and they will unsubscribe. I don't care. I really don't care about the unsubscribes. I don't want those people on my list anyway because they are not a good match for my list.

I just worry about the people who are on my list. I make sure that I'm always building my relationship with them, giving them great value and that I'm referring them to products and services that I know are good. Then I can feel comfortable, and know I'm building a database of customers for long-term profitability and not some short-term thing.

So began building the list with the end in mind. Remember, we want that optimized list, responsive list, people who know us, like us and trust us.

Notes

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

The three most important things in our email marketing are make it personal, make it personal, and make it personal. If you do that, you can achieve results that are outside industry average, he will have a better relationship with your customers and when it comes time to promote a product, whether you are promoting products as an affiliate or whether you are promoting your own products, whether or not someone out there has a product that is better, faster, cheaper, better quality, no matter what the one thing that they won't have is what you have and that's your personal relationship with your list, who is more likely to do business with you because they know you, they like you and they trust you.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Growing The List Self-Assessment Questions

1. What are three techniques you can use to build your list?

2. What sources will you use to attract and find your niche market?

3. How could you add multimedia to enhance communication with your list?

Next . . . Public Relations

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Launching With Style

Module 9

Section 7: Public Relations

By Sid Hale

Info Product Blueprint was created by
Kenneth A. McArthur

Alysan Delaney-Childs, Project Manager and Editor
Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

Public Relations

Sid Hale, the cofounder of jvAlert, tells you how to write, format and deliver the media release to promote your product. Sid shares tricks and tips he's used successfully over the years to develop buzz and a recognition in the media.

What you will learn in this Section:

- Proper formatting for a press release
- Tricks of the trade for 'hooks' to gain interest in your story
- How to use sources and statistics for your release

Submitting a media release is a bit like standing behind the red velvet rope, hoping you have what it takes to make it past the doorman and gain admittance into an "A" list event. The competition is fierce, with only the best of the best making it to the editor's desk, much less into the hands of the public.

So how can you rise above all others and make your press release gleam in the eyes of the publisher? All you need is a dash of researching skills, a pinch of creative talent, and a sprinkle of media insight, and you've whipped up a blue ribbon recipe for a results-oriented press release.

The Decision is Theirs

The publishing and broadcast media are very powerful. What filters through the desk of an editor to the eyes of the public is whatever they deem newsworthy.

Scandals. Tragedies. Triumphs. From international terrorism to Cousin Cathy's canine hero, the media hold all of the cards when it comes to what we do and do *not* know.

They also decide, to a degree, how much influence each story has on the public - by the placement and the size of space they assign to it. Readers are obviously going to focus on a half-size, front-page feature article more than they will a 10-line blurb buried in the back of the local section. Placement is crucial because it determines how close your news will get to the reader's eyes.

Fortunately, news sells. So getting attention for your media release will be a little like a sales pitch, without the blatant advertising. Sound impossible? Not when you consider how the media mindset operates.

The power of the media is incredible! One minute, a world leader is an internationally respected figure, and in seconds, CNN or some other 24-hour news circuit has leveled his career with devastating "just released" information

Notes

Editors are faced with a stack of news items every day, but only limited space to position them. The submissions on their desks rank in order of importance, and from that list, they will decide how much column space to give you. In order to have a larger piece of the pie, you need to make sure your release is unique, timely, and important to their audience.

Space is valuable, whether it's in the form of print space, or airtime on the radio or television. If you want to advertise your product or services, you'll have to pay a hefty price, and that's why the ability to create an unbiased media release is so important. Editors will decide if they want to allow your item *free* space, in the form of a news story, or if they'll reject it, and make you purchase an ad block instead.

Learn the Rules

There are certain rules to play by when dealing with your media contacts. Courtesy and common sense both play an important role in how they view your news. And don't forget to take into consideration the local tone and flavor of your own community's press.

Some media giants won't entertain the idea of publishing local news items that do not affect the country as a whole - even if it's the New York Times, and your soon-to-be-launched website or product is based out of New York City. But if the information is relevant enough to achieve national interest, then they *will* consider publishing your press release.

But, if you are gearing your release to a local audience through a community press market, then do all you can to develop and maintain a rapport with the individuals who make the decisions on whether or not to give your item the columns and inches you want. And never, ever address your press release to an editor who no longer works for the company. Take a few seconds to read the latest masthead to find out who the current editor is, and then send it to the right person – making sure to spell their name correctly.

If you're on friendly terms, the editor might give you inside information or direction on why your press item was denied space in the next issue. As a contributing reporter (which is what a press release writer is), you're an extension of the news department. So learn everything you can about how to be a team player with each organization. Request their stylebook, or ask if they adhere to any particular news format.

Make it Easy for Them

If you ignore the style of the paper or other media company, your value diminishes because you've actually *added* work to their already hectic schedules. If you disregard their formatting

Notes

and style functions, then the *paid* staff has to redo the work you send in, whether it's deciphering and typing your handwritten release, or reorganizing the information so that it can easily be edited and cut where necessary.

Many papers have a small staff, leaving extra work for the editor, such as sorting through the news, choosing photographs to accompany the stories, and plenty of time-consuming administrative tasks. The easier you make it on the editor, the more likely you'll see your headlines in print. If you follow the basic rules for the publication, you'll make the process quicker, allowing the editor to utilize their time on other important issues.

On the other hand, if you show little respect for the editor by writing your press release in longhand, or demanding that it be in the next issue, you'll be met with barriers, and probably ruin the chances of any future submissions even being considered.

News departments, chained to strict deadlines, simply do not have the time or manpower to deal with a horde of different contributor styles and formats. So, it's in your best interest to follow the publication's submission guidelines when sending in your news. If you don't, you run the risk of having your submission thrown away without any consideration. Busy editors won't waste time editing for style if they have to rewrite your entire piece, not when another submission might be similar in worthiness, and have the right style for their publication.

Take the time to investigate your target publication. Learn the structure and who makes the decisions on what goes in, and what stays *out* of the publication. When you get this information, use it to your advantage.

Go to the library and research back issues of the publication. Find out what items they've deemed newsworthy in the past, and see what tone, or "voice," the reporters used. If you can tailor your style to something similar to what the existing decision-maker has accepted for publication in the past, chances are you'll be on your way to seeing your item in print.

First Impressions

The media will begin judging your release as soon as they remove it from the envelope, lift it off the fax machine, or click on their email. **First impressions** are of utmost importance, so make sure it's aesthetically pleasing.

Follow proper formatting standards such as typing and font color and size. Don't get too cute and send it in on rainbow paper to make a splash. You'll make a splash all right – deep into the wastebasket! They've seen it all, but what it boils down to is "newsworthy" or "not."

Notes

Your first contact with the media should always accomplish the following:

- Get the editor's attention
- Easily identify your topic
- Showcase your news writing abilities
- Provide verifiable source materials and contacts

Include several easy ways for the editor or reporter to reach you should they have any questions or want a more in-depth article written about your product or services.

If you don't get their attention from the very first sentence, you may have lost them forever. An editor cannot possibly scan each and every press release sent to them to figure out what the writer is trying to say.

Make their job easier by stating the facts, but do it in a way that makes it a headline topic. Instead of titling your release, "New real estate site launched," try something like "HomeBasePlus emerges triumphant in the battle of technology versus service." It's catchy, and the lead sentence can clearly explain what the title hints. Chances are, your headline will be changed anyway, but hook the editor's eye from the beginning.

Don't try to impress the reader with overly expressive adjectives or superlatives. They'll just be edited out, and it gives your press release a phony tone, like that of an advertisement, as opposed to a factual news item.

Resist the urge to boast about your product or services. Offer the vital information about the "who, what, when, where, and why," and let the reader take the initiative in discovering its benefits from that point on.

Using quotes from experts or management personnel within the company or industry offers credibility to your press release. Media contacts love to be able to attribute a name to the concepts or opinions found within the piece, so choose wisely, and pick the most authoritative figure possible. Instead of using a positive quote from one of your customers, have the President of the company say a few words.

If you're sending in a media release about a soon to be launched website, or a newly formed company, be sure to include a direct contact name, phone number, and email address if possible, so that an editor/producer can easily find you if they have any questions about the information.

While the media are constantly competing among themselves to be the first to report (or *scoop)* headline news, contributors are competing to *be* that news. Give yourself a head start by learning the publication's style, and respectfully submit your item to the appropriate contact.

Notes

Before you send anything, ask yourself the following questions:

- Did I follow the proper formatting styles seen in a recent issue? Did I manage to develop a clear and concise document, or will it need to be rewritten by the editorial staff?
- Is my information timely? Is it news, or advertising?
- Does it affect the majority of the publication's audience?
- Are my facts correct, and verifiable?
- Is it objective, or have I approached the topic in a biased manner?
- Have I cut out any unnecessary information or boasting, so that it appears like any other news item?
- Is the release reader-friendly? Did I use the word "embark" where I could have used "go?" Did I use any "hype" words such as "exhilarating," or "thrilling?"
- Did I include my contact information so that the editor can easily contact me if they have any questions?
- Does the press release urge readers to contact the company or organization for further information?

Once you understand the media mindset, it's easier to conform to their standards and expectations.

Cooperation – Serve Their Need

The news industry is a rushed and hurried environment, and anything you can do to alleviate the stress of deadlines and tight spaces will be greatly appreciated. The more you work with your local news, the more receptive they'll be when it comes time to consider one of your press releases. If they can rely on you to follow simple procedures, leaving them with minimal follow-up work, then they'll most likely be eager to hear what it is you have to say in the future.

Remember that you and the editor rely on each other for information and coverage. Without press releases, he may not be able to fill up the space in his paper. And without the editor, the news you want to get in front of the readers won't be reaching *anybody*.

You might sometimes feel dejected when your item doesn't make it into print over another similar piece. But the editor looks at it from a newsworthy standpoint. Which press release, out of the hundreds, or thousands received each day, has what it takes to be worthy of their reader's time and attention? Craft your release well, and you'll greatly increase your chances of publication.

Notes

Follow Your Facts

Validate Your Voice with Research

In the news business, facts and figures have to be true. Period. There is no way around it, because the only thing a newspaper hates worse than being scooped is being wrong. Then, a retraction has to be printed, or a "We regret the error" notice in small print on page two, just to legally cover all bases.

If you're the reason the newspaper (or other media venue) printed incorrect information, believe me, they'll remember you every time the phone rings and they have to field a call from an angry reader who isn't happy with them.

Verify Your Facts

The best way to avoid this sticky problem is to verify your facts. One way is to pretend you're a lawyer and that anything that's hearsay is inadmissible. The judge (the editor in this case) will hold you in contempt if you try to sneak in unverified facts before the readers.

Checking your facts could help build your credentials in the business. Making errors that actually make it into print could cost you credibility, if not legal fees for slander - or worse. Editors will appreciate it if they don't have to run all over town, verifying facts that they worry might be inaccurate. If you have a press release that's heavy with complicated information, then provide any contact information for the editor that you can, in case he wants to have a staff member verify your story.

When writing up your release, never assume any of the "facts." Not only will the company or organization be angry if incorrect information is printed, but the newspaper will look on you with discontent for as long as they remember your name.

Then Do It Again!

Double-check even the most credible sources. Even if your source is an expert in their industry - if they give you a number for a specific bit of information, go the extra mile and verify the figures. Experts are not infallible, and your information must be 100% accurate.

If the story is about a specific position or person appointed within the company, go directly to the source for your information. Don't rely on the Vice President's secretary if the story is about the Vice President. Make an effort to contact him or her directly and get firsthand quotes for your story. Then, anything that is misunderstood will come back to haunt the Vice President – not you or the paper.

Notes

Don't be afraid to approach your sources for clarification. If you find out that some of your facts contradict each other, go back to your sources and explain the situation to them. If a company is announcing that it will open up 100 new positions, but another source says it will be 1,000 – go back to the company and find out from the most authoritative source which number is correct.

If the information in your press release is of vital importance, you might want to check with several different sources from within an organization. It couldn't hurt, and one source might end up mentioning a great reference for you to work with on other facts that could be included in your story.

Timeliness plays an important role in the integrity of your piece. If several months, or even days (in some cases) have passed, make a few phone calls to make sure your information is still accurate. It may be that the company has decided to move its new location to another city, and that's a pretty significant detail you'll need to know before it's published.

Consider how embarrassed certain media were when they announced that Al Gore had clinched the 2000 Presidential election. Hours later, they had to retract that error, and became the target of comedy skits for months to come. Never release information before verifying it to the best of your ability.

You can use many different types of sources to gather your information, depending on the reason for your media release. Sometimes everything you need, will be gathered in-house through company contacts, and sources that they provide.

However, if you're doing a piece about the effect your company's new anti-pollution policy will have on the community, it might be wise to do a little investigative research.

Find out what the current problem is, and how it's being dealt with. If the company is introducing a previously unheard of method to contain and dispose of waste products, then it might be wise to let them know that it will actually be solving a problem they might not even know existed. Your company will turn out to be a hero without having to write the media release in the form of a boasting, bragging document.

Where to Research

What's the very first research tool you every used? I'll give you a hint. Think back to primary school.

Public Library

The public library is a wealth of *free* information that is available to everyone. Librarians are very resourceful in helping you find

Notes

the information you need, so don't hesitate to ask if you find yourself stuck. The great thing about libraries is that they keep a great deal of information from a long time ago. So any facts you need are all at your fingertips. While you're there, be sure to study the exact media publications you're going to be targeting so that you have a feel for their style.

Don't forget that libraries often have a link to other libraries in the district. If you have the time to wait, you can request that a source your library doesn't carry, be sent over to that location for your use. There usually isn't any charge for this, and it's a great way to expand your resource center. If there is a nominal charge for this service, weigh the cost of not having the source in your material, and that should tell you if it's worth the price.

Don't limit yourself to the public library, though. There are plenty of other sources you can go to for the information you need. For instance, the company you're writing for, if it's a large corporation, probably has an in-house library, or a records room at the very least. Find out if you're permitted to peruse those files and if so, you might be able to generate a stronger background on your subject matter.

Academic Papers

Any universities that are in the area also probably have a variety of sources for your use, such as studies that have been conducted and reports that have been published. These can serve as a great authority basis for the groundwork of your release.

Almanacs

If you need specific facts and figures, find the best almanac or reference book available to you. These contain almost every known piece of scientific information we have to date. If you use one, be sure to use the most recent edition, as population figures, and number counts can rapidly grow or decline in a short amount of time.

Encyclopedias & Atlases

For geographical information, you'll want to source out the area's atlas or encyclopedia. Don't say the company headquarters are going to move to Arlington, if your national audience doesn't know if you mean Virginia or Texas. I've lived in Midlothian, Virginia for the past 25 years, and only recently realized there is also a Midlothian in Illinois, one in Maryland, and another in Texas.

Notes

If you're in need of statistical data, find out if you can utilize a current abstract. This uses sets of statistics and turns them into reader-friendly information that you can use to add credibility to your news item.

Quotations

If using quotes in your work, you'll have to make sure that you attribute them to the right person. If you're dealing with a celebrity, you can look up their most famous quotes in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* (access online at Bartleby.com/100/), or some other book of quotes that might be helpful.

If you're quoting a source from the company you're working with, it might be wise to contact them before the press release goes out, and read their quote back to them to make sure they agree with what it is *you* say they said.

Government Sources

Research doesn't end with library books and phone calls. In the United States, the Freedom of Information Act allows for any citizen to obtain certain government information at their request. Other, democratic governments likely have similar laws. You have the right to use any non-classified documents at your disposal in your press release, and using a government study definitely adds an element of reliability to your piece.

Census data can come in very handy when you want to inform the readers how your product or service will affect the community in a positive manner. You can use census data that is compiled every ten years, or yearly, depending on the source you get it from.

If you have the need to find legal decisions to back up your information, you want to start with a publication such as the *Index to Legal Periodicals*. This will direct you to where you can find the most accurate information and court decisions that relate to your subject matter.

Other government agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issue annual reports that come in handy when you need to find regional information that affects the audience.

The Internet

With the technology available today, it's easy to enter your subject matter into an Internet search engine, and get back thousands of results with the click of a button. But, don't assume everything you see is accurate.

Notes

A website, unless an official state or other government agency site, cannot be considered accurate until you have produced a verifiable source. If "Andy's Website on Pollution" says that half of the country's water source is contaminated with e-coli bacteria, you don't want to consider Andy an accurate source unless you verify that he's the Director of Water and Waste Management for the United States Government. Only then, can he be considered credible.

The Internet is a valuable source of leads, however. It can open up new questions that you hadn't previously thought to consider, and it can also point you in the direction of other lead sources that might be able to provide accuracy and credibility to your piece. If you have a library that has a public online database, it's a great way of using the Internet and the library combined from the comfort of your own office (or home).

Interviewing Sources

Interviews are another important part of researching your topic. Don't go into an interview without first thinking through your questions. The source you're meeting with (or talking to on the phone) doesn't have the time to waste waiting for you to fumble around with your notes and figure out what direction you want to take in your press release.

Sit down before the interview and consider the type of piece you're writing. Then, jot down some notes on important aspects of the topic you wish to discuss with your source. Don't try to ask your source for "off the record" information. It will only make them nervous, and it will feel more like an interrogation than an interview.

Carry a mini-recorder with you to the interview for accuracy, and to make sure the meeting moves along quickly. Before you leave the office, make sure it has fresh batteries, but don't rely on a tape alone for the notes.

Write down as much information as you can, without making the source stop and wait for you. You don't want to have to call him back a day later asking him to repeat everything because your tape failed to record the conversation. It's unprofessional, and will make him leery of dealing with you in the future.

Some things you might want to clarify in your meeting with a source are:

- What exactly do you need to know? This is important because they might not know the reason for your interview, or the topic you'll be writing about.
- Why do you want to know this? Some information is rather sensitive, and sources might not want to divulge certain facts if they don't have to, or if it's not crucial to the topic.

Notes

- How are you going to use this information? Your source is going to be fuming if you use this information against him, so be upfront about how it will be used in your media release.

Before you go to the interview, do a bit of background research on your subject and the person you're going to meet with. It will help to know if he left a particular company because of their ethical standards being lower than his expectations, or if he had a dream of building his small entrepreneurial enterprise into a worldwide venture.

If you run across some sensitive information that might be damaging to others, weigh the consequences of its use before you jump in and deliver it to the public's eyes. It's not always best to reveal everything you know without considering how it is going to affect others.

If you present your press release with an authoritative voice, and the editor knows that you've done your research, they will appreciate your effort, and may in turn ask you to write even more on the topic. Once they have worked with you, and verified your facts to be true and accurate, they'll be impressed enough to move your submission to the top of the ranks the next time you have information that needs to get in front of the eyes of the public.

If, however, you disregard journalistic principals, and offer a document full of misleading information, or unreliable sources, the editor won't want to work with you in the future. It would be a waste of his time to have to re-interview, re-verify, and re-write your entire piece to do a factual story he can actually print.

To write a successful press release, takes a minimal amount of time to do the groundwork for your information. The further you go in making sure your piece has a newsworthy, *trustworthy* tone to it, the greater your chances of a successful media release campaign.

Writing From the Consumer's Point of View

Approaching Your Audience

Writing a press release is a tricky combination of advertising and unbiased reporting. You're responsible for getting your company or your client's name accepted by the media and in front of the public's eye.

The position you're in requires you to accomplish two totally opposite tasks: Spin your story so that it projects a positive light on you or your client, and deliver a completely neutral news report to your media contacts.

Notes

All the while, you're expected to do both of these things at the greatest benefit to the intended audience. When people turn on the news on the radio or television, or pick up a paper, they're expecting quality, fair journalism, and pertinent information about the events that are going to somehow affect them directly.

Now everyone's aware that certain editorial staff has their own slant on politics and world issues. But we all expect those opinions to stay on the editorial page, not find their way into the actual news that we're assuming to be true to the best of the publication's knowledge.

A media release is generally coming from a company or organization that has something to gain from the public knowing about its details. The only thing that will get your item into print is the potential worth it has to the target market.

Understand the Interests of Your Audience

The best way to determine the worthiness of your news is to look at it from the outsider's point of view. Try on the shoes of the average citizen in your community, and find what interests them and affects them the most. This is exactly what the publication's editor is concerned with, so do your research.

First you need to consider whom you're targeting. Are you announcing a new industrial plant that will open up 800 new jobs in a small community? Then your audience will be vast, requiring less research and specification on your part on how to approach them.

Are you holding a blood drive to help the local blood bank raise its dangerously low reserve levels? Then your target will be narrower. It will affect community-conscious individuals who are open to volunteering for this type of assistance.

Everything you write should somehow be connected to your audience. In order to accomplish this, you have to show and tell them how each and every detail will affect their lives either now, or in the future.

If you're writing a press release about a recipient of a local award, it will be great for the recipient, but makes little difference to the rest of the community as far as news is concerned.

Next, decide what key issues you want your audience to know and act upon. Do you want them to be aware of an upcoming development in the area? Or is the company trying to bolster its image with those who are already skeptical of them to begin with? Find one or more vital elements and focus on delivering those with a punch.

Notes

Publish Only the Pertinent – the Newsworthy

If the responsibility has landed on you to simply gain coverage of the company, but you have no firm direction to work on, then find out how many different paths your news could take, and then act on the most influential ones, and those with the widest appeal.

If you or your client has many community activities throughout the year, and is launching products on a regular basis, choose which pieces of information are most important, and then write about them, not all of your activities will be guaranteed space in the publication. In fact, keep in mind that editors can't give you your own column each week, so pick and choose wisely on the topics you decide to send in.

The worst problem editor's encounter when sifting through the stack of soon-to-be discarded press releases sitting on top of their desk is that most simply aren't newsworthy. They lack all or most of the qualifications of being *news*: new, local, unique, relevant, and significant.

As the media release coordinator, it is your job to find the most newsworthy items your company is involved in, and build on that topic. Certain items, such as the postal department's clerk being promoted to assistant delivery person, is simply more suitable for a company newsletter or other in-house publication source.

An editor is going to look at that piece of information and wonder, "Why are they sending *that* to *me*?" You've then succeeded in wasting their time, and possibly aggravating them – not something you want to do if you ever come upon a *really* vital tidbit that might actually be important. If they remember your first submission, they might toss it in the trash without even spending a second looking at the title.

Focus

Don't pile more data onto your readers than they can handle. Your company might *want* to express twenty different things that are coming up in the near future, but the fewer items you put before your audience, the more likely they'll be to act on them in the way you hope they will.

Keep it Simple – Be Concise

If the company plans to release upcoming information about a new product or service they are offering, refrain from being too technical in your article. Keep the terminology simple, describing what the product or service will do, and how it will improve the reader's lives in some way.

Notes

Don't explain the details about how a statistical study's results led to an overhaul in the way you do business. Save that for your advertisements. Stick with the who, what, when, where and why, divulging the specifics of those questions, so you'll stay within the boundaries of need-to-know information.

Don't talk over your reader's head. There's no need to write using complicated words, such as "erroneous," when you could just say "wrong." Cater to education backgrounds of all levels.

Simplify words, sentences, and paragraphs, but don't feel like you have to "dumb down" your news. Just avoid long, unfamiliar words that may make your reader pause for clarity.

Follow the mindset of Andy Rooney, whose commentaries are heard weekly near the end of each 60 Minutes segment. In his book, "Not That You Asked," Rooney says he's suspicious of writers who use words such as "launder" when they mean "wash," or "inexpensive," when they mean "cheap." He's perplexed at how writers can't just be satisfied with the word "now," insisting upon using "currently," instead.

Avoid flowering your language so that each sentence overfills and drowns your reader. Shorter sentences are more powerful and catchy

Shorter sentences reduce clutter, and relay your message to the audience faster. The more unnecessary words you eliminate, the better your chances of getting the space you're looking for in each publication.

Be Timely

Consider the timeliness of your release to the public. Are you trying to report about your new resume writing services when the unemployment rate is at an all-time high? That could be construed as positive or negative, so spin it accordingly and in the best interest of the public.

Make it Flow

Organize your message. Readers aren't going to be happy if your message jumps around the page without a central theme. You want each audience member to grasp the intended focus of your thoughts, not arrive at a variety of conclusions because you didn't develop your key ideas succinctly.

It's not necessary to force the reader to search for clues about your message. It may seem cute, or stylish to write in a way that hints about several different topics, but keep in mind that your job is to deliver news, not a mystery. Your reader may end up frustrated and leave your article for a more organized one. Get to the point quickly, and add details later on.

Notes

Bear in mind that your average news audience is middle aged, married, and a white-collar worker who normally spends 20-30 minutes a day focusing on the news. If a person reads one form of media news, it's likely that they also pay attention to other forms as well.

But, since everyone's schedule seems to be overloaded these days, the news is normally consumed on the run. So, if your press release is unorganized the reader will quickly move on to another story and skip yours altogether.

Fact vs. Opinion

Opinions are not news – everybody has one. Try to write facts, and avoid stating opinion.

One way to make sure that you are releasing facts is to watch carefully for any adjectives you use in your release. Like any other news item, you're expected to send in an unbiased piece of information. Make sure you avoid writing words like "best," "only," "exciting," or "dull."

Instead of saying:

> "The mayor lives in an expensive house."

Say:

> "The mayor's house is estimated to be worth $780,000."

If you do have to include an opinion in your press release (i.e. at the request of a client), be sure to attribute it to someone other than the media publishing the story.

It's fine to say:

> "This is by far the best product we've released to date," said Corporation X's Vice President, Steven Smith, of his company's soon-to-be-launched software.

Refrain from stating it's the *best* without using a specific quote.

Avoid Stereotypes

The last thing you want is to alienate your audience. Don't use stereotypes, whether sexual, ethnic, or otherwise. Aside from avoiding basic title taboos, such as mail***man***, fire***man***, etc., it's also best to avoid touchy societal subjects.

These include reporting on a woman's marital status or physical appearance. Always ask yourself if the same information would be relevant if you were reporting about a man. You don't want to alienate half of your audience by unintentionally insulting them.

Notes

In a Nutshell

In review, write for your audience by following three basic guidelines:

- Write Simply
- Write Clearly
- Write Fairly

Ask yourself these questions to see if you've written from the consumer's point of view:

- Is my media release easy to understand?
- Have I used any adjectives to describe the focus of my content?
- Are my employment titles gender-neutral?
- Have I geared the document toward a topic that most of the community will appreciate and want to read?
- Is my timing good - or bad - for disclosing this information?
- Have I answered all of the basic questions my audience might have once they finish reading this piece?
- Is it clear to the reader who the source of this information is – so that if he or she wishes to learn more, they'll easily know whom to contact?
- Have I written in a succinct manner so that the audience will be able to grasp the message without having to spend too much time deciphering it?
- Have I focused on the most pertinent information– not wasting editorial time with unimportant events?

If you've worked through all of the complexities above, then your media release should read like a true news story, and not resemble that of a biased, puff piece. If possible, have someone else take a look at the story and see if they notice any instances where it looks as if someone who works for the company or organization has written it.

Following these criteria will endear you to the community as an ethical and unbiased presenter of information. And it just might produce positive results for your press release campaign, too!

Tips of the Trade

Headlines Hook the Reader

There's a fine line between a lead, a headline, and a slug - in the world of submitting your news information. For the purposes of a press release, the three items are basically one and the same, or at least, have the same effect as one another when put before an editor for consideration.

Notes

If you're sending in your work with a stunning headline, be forewarned that the editorial department will probably change it before it hits the newsstands.

You can, however, tempt the editor into giving your press release more consideration if you create a first impression that makes them curious about the rest of your story.

Let's break it down into three ways an editor might initially view your work:

Leading the Pack

A lead is actually the first sentence in the main body of your story. It should be the most powerful sentence on your paper, as it will almost single-handedly make or break your submission.

There are crucial elements your lead must contain for it to achieve maximum effectiveness with your readers. Most editors will look at your lead, and from that, expect to know what your entire press release is about.

To accomplish this, you have to include the *who, what, when, where,* and *why* (or *how*) in that very first sentence - while maintaining the perfect balance between boring, and information overload.

There are two ways to form your lead sentence.

Instead of writing:

> Dallas, TX – Corporation XYZ plans on giving a party for all of their employees to celebrate their recent success in the Greeting Card Industry. On March 11th, employees will be invited to the Hilton Hotel…

Try:

> Dallas, TX – Corporation XYZ will celebrate their recent success in the Greeting Card industry by hosting a party for all 100 employees at the Hilton Hotel on Main Street at 8:00 PM March 11th.

This sentence covers the who (Corporation XYZ), what (a party), when (March 11th), where (Hilton Hotel on Main Street), and why (because of their recent success in the Greeting Card Industry). Don't make the information run into two separate sentences, as the first example showed. Tell the reader all of the main points in the lead sentence, and they will gather additional information in the body of the content.

Editors and readers alike will be able to tell from that one sentence whether or not you're a professional, and if your work

Notes

deserves further time and consideration. If you fail to clarify your topic, then the reader will move on to the next item that interests him.

Some writers prefer to start with their lead, devoting time and energy to polishing its form. But if you're having trouble developing a quality lead, put it aside and move on to complete the rest of your story first. Once you have the main body finished, it will be easier for you to gather the key issues and facts for your opening sentence.

Instead of writing a lengthy, all-inclusive lead sentence, try to include the most interesting facts in a punchy, appealing manner. This is the second method of developing your lead sentence – order of importance.

Once you figure out the *who, what, when, where,* and *why*, arrange that data in order of importance, and start your lead with the one word that stands out the most.

For example, instead of writing:

> "In a party designed to celebrate the long-awaited success of Corporation XYZ, the company will honor its hard working employees with a celebration at the Hilton Hotel on March 11th."

Start with one of the five W's – more specifically, the most important W:

> "Corporation XYZ will host a celebration at the Hilton Hotel on March 11th to honor their newfound success.

If you still feel that your lead sentence is not an item of excellence in your entire press release, but have tried revising it, without success, don't resist sending it in as is, because the editor might give it his attention regardless, assuming he can alter the lead if necessary.

Extra! Extra! Read All About It! Headline Happiness…

A headline is usually an incomplete sentence that tops the story and stands out in bold print for the reader to see. It comes before the lead sentence in print, and normally doesn't give a variety of facts, but instead offers a hint as to what the item is about.

For instance – A headline in a publication might read:

Example 1: "Two dead in ten car pile-up." or

Example 2: "Boy recognized as local hero."

Notes

Notice the lack of details in a headline format. The first example doesn't tell where, when, or how it all happened. All you know is a basic who (not specific, because that will be divulged in the story itself), and what (a car accident).

The same is true of the second example. We don't know who the boy is, or where he hails from exactly, or why he's being recognized, or even when he became a hero. What we do know is that this is a positive story about a young male child who did something beneficial for his community, and is being awarded for it.

Headlines are what sell newspapers – the editors and other news staff will devise those. Your job is to sell your particular story to the reader. Since you have no control over the headlines, concentrate on working your content to the best possible format.

If you feel you must include a headline with your press release, then specify that it is tentative, showing that you understand that the publication might deem it necessary to alter it as they see fit.

When you send in your press release, your main objective should be to provide newsworthy information that the editor will view as imperative for their readers to know. The news staff will transform your release into a formula they learned when they studied journalism in a formal education setting.

Many press releases gain a voice through the media regardless of the fact that they were sent in with an overtly biased tone, resembling an advertisement. Depending on the worthiness of the news, an editor and his staff might not discard your submission, or mind rewriting it, if the news will benefit the sale of their publication.

However, to increase your chances of acceptance, a strong intro, followed by a basic news format for the main content, will add strength and credibility to your submission.

Slugging to Sell

A slug is a bit of information that allows an editor to easily identify your piece. If the organization you're writing for is holding a fundraiser for needy families in the community, then the slug, which would appear in the upper left-hand corner of your paper, would read: Corporation XYZ Fundraiser. Nothing more. Nothing less.

Editors are bombarded with a barrage of press releases every day. They have to be able to quickly identify and sort through the items in order to rank them in order of importance for possible publication.

Notes

Obviously, a slug reading "Cash Found" will garner more interest than "New Lawn Company." Finding the best possible slug for your story will allow the editor to add your piece to the higher-ranking items, but it's important not to lie in order to trick the editor into spending their time with your piece.

The editor will call you on it if you attempt to make your story into something it's not in your slug, headline, or lead intro. Assuming it does make it into print, past the watchful eye of the publication's staff, the audience won't be too happy when they think they're about to spend time reading one thing, but find out it's actually something completely different.

It might help to think of your lead as a summary of your entire story. Your press release is actually two items – the lead, and the body. The body is a fleshing out of the lead, which states the most important factors of the news piece itself.

As you write your press release, picture a pyramid. Many established reporters would tell you to use the pyramid as a method of developing your content. The lead is the first block on top. Everything after that follows on its way down in order of importance.

When the editor decides to use your press information, but learns that he only has a limited space to devote to your topic, he or she will tell the editorial staff to cut it from the bottom up. Therefore, put any information, which is expendable in the last paragraph of your press release.

Some editors might be wary of your work if your lead does not reflect the most important items in the rest of your press release. Make sure that you include those bits and pieces of greatest value in the lead, followed by a more in-depth explanation in the body of your content.

Things to Avoid

There are a variety of ways to form the intro to your press release.

Besides the guidelines already mentioned, it's best to avoid ever starting your piece with a question. An interrogative lead is never a professional way to write news.

Although you might feel that it piques the reader's curiosity, all it will do is waste the reader's time, and that will cause them to skip your item altogether. Don't say, "Will the PTA raise enough funds to buy new computers for the school" when you can say "The PTA will hold a fundraiser Monday night in an attempt to provide the school with all new computers."

Notes

Don't try to cram everything into one sentence if it seems to overload the information. If the five *W's* won't fit gracefully into the first sentence, then cut out the least important information, and save it for the second sentence. There is no need to practice deliberate overkill just to follow news formatting.

Just as you shouldn't lead with a question, you also should never lead with a negative sentence. If the PTA meeting was rained out, don't write, "The PTA did not have its meeting Monday night due to bad weather." Say, "Rain spoiled the fundraising efforts of the PTA Monday night…" Or, even better, if something is going to replace the thing that did not happen, mention that first: for example – "The PTA will hold a meeting Tuesday night to take the place of Monday night's meeting, which was rained out."

Checklist for Intro

- Have I used, but not forced my five *W's* into my lead?
- Is my lead clear, concise, and positive?
- Is my lead appropriate in length, or have I tried to include too much information?
- Does my lead reflect the most important ideas based on the content of the body of my press release?
- Have I started with the most important information, and methodically mentioned less relevant points as the item progressed?
- Does my lead reflect matters of substance, or have I over-generalized?
- Does my lead answer to the broadest possible audience, or does it cater to one specific group in particular?

Everyone is different when it comes to developing his or her own leads. Some prefer to write the lead first, and then flesh out the story so that it's centered on the lead. And some prefer to write the story first, including all of the relevant facts, followed by writing a lead that is all-inclusive of their prewritten information.

Whichever method you choose, try to follow the basic rules in leads, headlines, and slugs. Include the most important facts, write with clarity and value in mind, and try to target as many people as possible with your intro sentence.

The wider your appeal, the more likely an editor will want to include your work in his publication. The more people you cater to, the more people that will purchase his publication.

Notes

Destination: Information!

Covering the Five *W's* In Your Content

By now you probably have a good idea of what your topic is, and how to write it for the eyes and ears of your audience. Now comes the easiest part of developing your press release – the main content.

It doesn't matter if the goal is press for an event, product, or service – the formula remains the same. As mentioned in a previous chapter, you'll need to sit down and detail the Five *W's* of your subject. *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* (Or *How*, if Why isn't applicable).

Once you know the basic answers to these questions, and arrange them in order of importance in your lead sentence, you'll want to follow that order when fleshing out your story. If *Where* is ultimately more important than *Who*, then start with the *Where* first.

For our example here, let's assume they rank in order as it appears above. Now, we can approach each issue and learn how to make the most out of each answer.

The Who

Normally, this is the most important factor that your audience will be concerned with. If a product is launching, they want to know who's putting it out – Microsoft, or Sam's Software? If a fundraiser is being organized – is it for the Democratic, or Republican Party candidates?

Answering the *Who* is perhaps the easiest item to detail. There are concrete facts and data about the *Who* – their name, location of headquarters, size of the company or organizations – all of the facts that make up who they are as an organization.

More specifically, the *Who* of a company also entails the individual people associated with it. Everyone from the maintenance worker to the CEO has a vested interest in what goes on in, and what happens to, the company.

In a media release, it's important to hear directly from those who initiated the news in the first place. Did the President of the Company sign a deal to add 1,500 jobs to the workforce? Then quote him on the *Why* and *When* the jobs will materialize.

Has a local volunteer for your organization raised an important sum of money, or *trying* to for a specific cause? Highlight her in the story, attributing quotes to her as well - in order to add credibility, and a human element to the piece.

Notes

The What

Conveying the *What* is the primary purpose of a press release, but most people have a tough time deciding if a particular topic is worthy of a press release.

If you're wondering what exactly should be covered in a press release, think along the lines of "newsy" and interesting topics. Examples include: your online presence; important information regarding a change in management or the components of your business; special information that you've published online; any proprietary product, methodology, or white paper that you offer through your consulting services; the announcement of events and appearances; and so on.

If you're not sure about what sort of information you should cover in a press release, consider these ideas to see if any apply to your business:

- Starting a new business
- Opening a new branch office
- A merger or acquisition
- Introducing a new product (or maybe your first)
- Forming a new strategic partnership or alliance
- Celebrating an anniversary
- Announcing a restructuring of the company
- Receiving an award
- Receiving an appointment
- Participating in a charity event
- Introducing a unique strategy/approach
- Announcing a partnership
- Changing the name of the company or of a product
- Offering an article or series of articles for publication
- Recognition of the company, the product, or an executive by almost any publication or organization
- Announcing your willingness to speak on particular subjects of interest
- Issuing a statement of position on a local, regional, or national issue
- Announcing a public appearance on television, radio, or in person
- Launching your Website
- Announcing free information available
- Announcing that you've reached a major milestone
- Obtaining a new, significant customer
- Expanding or renovating the business
- Establishing a unique vendor agreement
- Meeting some kind of unusual challenge or rising above adversity
- Restructuring your business or its business model
- Setting up a customer advisory group
- Announcing the results of research or surveys you have conducted

Notes

* Announcing that an individual in your business has been named to serve in a leadership position in a community, professional, or charitable organization
* Sponsoring a workshop or seminar
* Making public statements on items of general interest (i.e. future business trends or conditions)

What is happening? Is it happening *to* someone? Then the audience needs to know. Is your organization fighting to save a homeless shelter from being destroyed for a new parking lot? Items that affect others are of great interest to all of us – even if we're not directly involved.

When writing about the *What* of a topic, you're usually talking about a verb. Something is happening, will happen, or did happen. Whenever possible, use an active verb instead of a passive one. For example:

Instead of saying:

> "XYZ will hold a meeting Monday night."

Say:

> "XYZ will meet Monday night."

And always avoid prepositional phrases whenever possible. Don't say, "Mr. Doe, the Vice President of XYZ Corporation, says…" Simplify it by writing "XYZ Vice President Doe says…"

When there are many possible "Whats" coming up, don't try to cram them all into one press release. Try to find a balance between what you think is most important, and what an *editor* would want to see based on audience appeal. Don't lose sight of the fact that, in all likelihood, not everything you send in is going to be published.

You don't want to write a press release telling the public that John Doe was promoted to CEO, **and** the company is opening a new plant soon, **and** they're having a picnic that will be open to the public, **and** it happens to fall right around the time the new product is being introduced.

This isn't Destination: Information – it's information overload! Your readers will walk away dazed and confused about what they just read – unsure of what the intended message was because of its jumbled nature. Focus on the best points, and stick to them!

The *What* in your story is the item you want your reader to act on. Fundraising? You want donations. New product or services? You're looking for a sale. New jobs? Get those applicants in the door, not to mention grabbing some positive public relations as a result of the press.

Notes

For the *What* answer, use the most interesting angle to your audience. If an 89-year old volunteer is devoting sixty hours a week to raise money so that the organization can purchase enough turkeys so that every needy family can celebrate Thanksgiving, center your piece around her, not the organization itself. The press release will still get its message across – that they should help her meet her goals, and you will have used a human-interest angle to do it.

The When

Timeliness is everything (well, almost everything) to the editor you're approaching with your press release. First, he's going to make sure your subject is appealing to his audience. But next, he wants to know if it's relevant at this time.

Always report on events or products as close to the release date or launch date as possible. Give the editor enough time to review the press release, and revise it, so that he can publish it the day before or the day of your event.

Don't send in an announcement that tells his readers that last month, the organization raised enough money to buy a new computer. Timeliness would require you to announce that particular bit of information *as* you're trying to raise funds.

The same is true with products and services. Don't try to have a publication tell its audience that you or your client released two new items *last year*. An editor isn't going to want to announce something that's too far down the road, either. Save your impending news for a time when it's going to actually affect the readers.

Keep in mind the question "What have you done for me lately?" That question identifies the type of information an editor is seeking. While you want to be specific in telling the audience *when* something is going to happen, don't feel you have to go into too much detail. If a meeting will be held Monday night, August 6th, at 8:15 pm, simply write it as: Monday the 6th, at 8:15 pm.

If a product is being launched, stick to the day, month, and year. Unless it's an item that customers are going to line up for at a retailer's door in the wee morning hours, it's not necessary to tell the exact time you plan to put the product on the shelves.

If the When in your story would nicely complement another community event, try to arrange for the two happenings to coincide, if at all possible. For instance, if a highly publicized rodeo is coming to town in November, see if it's feasible to shoot for a launch date of October for your new line of leather apparel.

Notes

Any edge you can use to leverage the power of the press in your favor is worth considering, since the publishing of your press release is like getting free advertising space in the publication.

The Where

Another important aspect the editor is going to look for in your press release is whether it concerns his readers. Localization is an important factor in getting your news out to the public.

If your company is opening a new office, 1,000 miles away, chances are, the readers are going to say, "So what?" But if the current office, located in their town, is *moving* to another city 1,000 miles away, thus increasing the unemployment rate dramatically, it becomes instant news.

It is possible for news to happen elsewhere, and still affect the local community. If your company's headquarters located across the country, held a blood drive and found a match for a rare blood type that is going to save a local girl's life, it's newsworthy.

The closer your news hits home, the greater its chances of being published, and maintaining interest among your audience. Even if the news itself isn't localized, try to attach some sort of local angle to it.

If the event is happening elsewhere, and the event itself is the main news, state that first, but don't bury the fact that it's also going to affect those in the community. Bring that information to the forefront, directly after the *What* of your story. For example:

> "XYZ Corporation (who) has been sold to its sister company in Japan (what), resulting in ten domestic plants shutting their doors, including the one here in X City (where)."

The main news is that the company has been sold and that most of the domestic plants will close. But by adding the fact that their own plant will close as well, you've succeeded in localizing the news for your audience.

Many press releases will not have a specific local angle at all, and that's fine as long as it will still somehow be of interest to the publications' readers. If your client is a household name, and something big is about to happen, they want to know about it just like the rest of the country.

But if you or your client is opening a franchise in another town, hundreds of miles away, and it has no visible effect on your

Notes

immediate community, send your press release to the editor of the primary publication in the *new* location for maximum coverage.

The Why (or How)

Often, the *Why* (or *How*) is the first item to be trimmed from the press release if it isn't relevant to the rest of the story. So how do you know what should and should not be explained?

Look at it from a reader's point of view. If a company is hiring 20,000 new employees, and all you know is it's "because the President of the Company said so," either contact him for a more in-depth explanation, or forgo it altogether.

Most of the time, the press release will offer an explanation as to why an event is occurring.

> "The PTA (who) is accepting donations (what) to raise money for a new library (why)."

or

> "The PTA (who) is trying to raise funds for a new library (what) by having a bake sale (how)."

How comes into affect much more prominently when the audience is supposed to act on the information. You want to tell them how they can help, how they can participate to bring about positive change in their community, how they can make a difference.

Once you master the *Who, What, When, Where*, and *Why* of your press release, you can begin to revise it and tighten the wording so that it appears to be reader friendly, while ensuring that all of the questions your readers will want to know have been answered.

As a review, develop your content in this order:

- Write down the answers to the Five *W's*.
- Arrange the W's in order of importance.
- After writing your lead, start to flesh out the answers in more detail.
- Be as detailed as you need to be without congesting the content.
- Write your text so that it provides a way the reader can take action.

The editor of each publication will most likely rewrite some or all of your content, so your job is to provide him with the finest story you can, so that you lessen his workload and ensure the most important facts (to you) make it into the publication. Write, Rewrite, and then Review.

Notes

A Lesson in the "Less-Is-More" Theory

Tempting With Teasers

If there's one thing an editor hates to read, it's a dull press release that rambles on about unimportant information. Your primary function as a direct extension of the news staff is to relay significant news to the editor so that they can pass it along to their readers.

However, the content you send should not only be worthy of valuable space in the publication, but should also include an irresistible factor as well. Making your news alluring can be done in two different ways.

- Either the information alone is something the audience can't live without, or
- You make it *seem* that way.

News that stands on its own two feet is of paramount concern to the entire community. This includes national coverage of worldwide issues, and major tragedies and triumphs. A lawsuit involving Sam's Software *might* be interesting to the local consumers, but a lawsuit against Microsoft *will* be of great interest.

Why? Because Microsoft produces a product that's used in almost every business in the world. Sam's Software doesn't have the recognition that Microsoft does.

Using a "Teaser"

If your news isn't exactly a top-of-the-hour headline, you'll need to draw your audience into your world, where the news you're presenting *is* of utmost importance. How can you do this?

By **tempting** your readers into learning more.

You don't do this by giving them a "shotgun" lead. A shotgun lead is a method of introducing a story where the writer immediately tries to cram as much information as he can into the very first sentence. Then the reader might as well stop reading after that first sentence, because you've already placed your cards on the table.

While you want to tempt your reader, you also want to avoid delaying relevant information by asking them a question. Unless the publication is a lighthearted, human-interest outlet, then it's best to avoid question leads in a news publication.

To offer your audience a more thrilling read, try using a suspenseful lead to lure them into the rest of the text. But to do

Notes

this, you must maintain an honest approach and a high degree of integrity.

For example:

> "Sheriff Patterson realized Monday morning, that something was amiss, when he answered a call from a two-year old Labrador Retriever."

This lead hints at the events that took place, and makes the reader want to continue to find out *how* a dog called the police station, *why* it called, and what happened *after* Sheriff Patterson answered the phone.

If you were writing it as a shotgun lead, it might read like this:

> "Sheriff Patterson received a call Monday morning from a Labrador Retriever, who was trained to push the automatic 911 button on its owner's phone."

A lead like this tells us that the dog was trained prior to the event, on how to dial the emergency number, so chances are, the owner had an on-going ailment of some sort. A reader *might* continue on to find out what happened, but it's pretty much all summed up in the first sentence. It's just a matter of whether or not you want to read a story about a canine hero.

The "Less-Is-More" theory doesn't necessarily mean fewer words – just less information. Of course, it's always good to keep your verbiage down to a minimum for the editor's sake, and to increase your chances of publication. But less *information* means teasing your audience with good things to come.

Using Shock Value

Another method of luring the reader into devouring your story is by shock value. This doesn't mean offensive, just shocking. There's a difference between the two that is as important as any other factor in developing your press release.

<u>Don't Offend</u>

Offensive would be anything your audience would possibly be angry with you for printing, such as explicit language or graphic details or pictures.

For instance, the "wardrobe malfunction" during the half-time show of Super Bowl XXXVIII was intended to produce "shock" value, but was viewed by many as offensive.

You may notice in your local paper, that a story is written about a crime or particularly gruesome accident, will have a warning preceding the article.

Notes

Info Product Blueprint

This warns readers of vivid details, so that if they prefer to skip that information, they can. It's better to forewarn your audience, rather than sneaking the text in, and then hearing about it later.

Some publications and news shows, unintentionally offend their viewers by reporting on a community's dislike for a certain establishment, for instance, while showing graphic scenes directly into the homes of the viewer.

Shocking, on the other hand, heightens the reader's initial reaction, but explains the information throughout the rest of the story. A shocking example might be the following:

> "Ten high school students were pulled from the wreckage of an overturned truck Tuesday morning, as firefighters scrambled to bring them to safety."
>
> "I loved it," said Jessica Smith, her head encased in a thick bed of bandages.

The reader is thinking – "She *loved* it?" But the next sentence goes on to say…

> "The Mothers Against Drunk Drivers Association sponsored the event, which demonstrates how drinking and driving affects all of those around us."

Ah. Now the reader knows the event was a hoax. No children were really injured, and we can see how Jessica would be enthusiastic about participating in such an impacting display.

You do have to be careful when working with teaser leads, however. Sometimes they can backfire. If your reader is in a hurry, he or she might be irritated that they wasted even a few valuable seconds on a false setup.

Others will be grateful for the deviation from the standard news format, and will appreciate the relief that comes from knowing it wasn't a bad accident after all. Look to your intended media target to find out what lead style the editorial staff prefers, or adheres to.

If you don't see any leeway from the basic factual lead intro, then stay with what works for that particular publication. In the example above, you would rephrase it to read:

> "Mothers Against Drunk Drivers sponsored a lifelike wreckage scene at Cross County High School Tuesday morning to demonstrate the ill effects of drinking and driving."

Whatever method you use to entice your audience into reading the rest of your story, do it fairly and honestly. Don't trick a

Notes

reader into thinking a story is about *one* subject, only to have them discover it's really about something totally different.

<u>Don't Mislead</u>

Make your teaser intrigue and attract readers, but stay away from misleading them or giving away too much information from the beginning. Give it an unexpected twist or turn to add a bit of the unexpected to your piece.

Your teaser should prepare the audience for what's to come. Never start your piece in a positive light, only to take a dark tone later on in the body of the press release. An example of this might be:

> "Patterson Industries will open a new location on the East Cost this summer. Unfortunately, this means 15,000 jobs will disappear from our county in late August."

Tell your readers from the start if the news if good or bad – especially if it has a profound impact on the lives of the citizens who are reading it.

Your intro should indicate the tone of the piece following the first sentence. A teaser can be introduced at any point in the story, but the text following it should directly relate back to the teaser.

Don't open with a teaser and then not explain it until three paragraphs later. Your reader will be frustrated trying to find the information, or lost once he stumbles upon it, and can't recall what it's referring to.

This is called a trick lead, and your audience will hate you for it. The premise here is that if you tempt them right away, then they'll be willing to read the rest of the story just to find out three-quarters of the way down the page, what they *thought* they were going to find out in the beginning.

It defers crucial facts, and shouldn't be used to enhance your message. It might end up bringing you a disaster.

"Less is More" is also "Unique"

The "Less-Is-More" theory can best be effectively used if you can find a unique method of enticing your audience, but immediately following, answer the riddle you placed before them. It breaks the monotony of the standard news format, but quenches their desire for the basic facts.

Your intentions in writing a provocative teaser are to try to make the reader choose your story over someone else's, and to

Notes

spend some time in your story before they leave. On average, readers spend only 20-30 minutes per day consuming news.

Break that down to each section they open, and every page, and the chances of them actually reading your entire story are slim to none at best. Make sure you follow the guidelines below to increase the stretch of time readers spend learning more about your article's contents.

- Do I have a unique angle to offer my readers?
- Have I given everything away from the beginning, or is there more to tell once they sit down with the bulk of my content?
- Is my intro offensive to any group of people?
- Does my intro lead the reader to the next sentence, or halfway down the page?
- Have I made my intro as interesting as possible, while focusing on the main idea of my story?
- Did I mislead the readers, or does my intro accurately reflect what it's about?

Teasers in Print vs. Broadcast Media

If your press release allows for a minimal amount of teaser touting, your readership will increase as the audience anxiously awaits your next bit of information. If you overdo it, though, they might view you as someone who doesn't provide them with professional news quickly enough.

Tantalizing teasers have more to do with how you present your information than what your information actually *is*. The bad thing is, you don't really have control over how your ideas are ultimately presented to the audience.

The editor of the publication has full control over that. And he or she will ensure that the publication is uniform in how it delivers its news to the public. Your most valuable source of direction, then, is to get hold of an actual recent publication, and write your intros in the same format.

This development also has a lot to do with what media you choose to send your press release to. If it's the newspaper, chances are, they'll follow the basic Five W format of leading into a story.

However, if the release is being sent to a local television station, the producers will almost definitely lead with a teaser. They'll tempt the audience right before a commercial, hoping they don't change channels in the meantime, and then again once they return from their break, as they dive into the story itself.

One difference between the print media and broadcast media is the way they promote their stories. In a newspaper, the

Notes

headlines are front and center – readily available as the very first thing a reader sees and consumes.

But in a news show on television, the best is saved for last. Time after time, you'll hear the broadcaster say, "Coming up next," but next doesn't happen until 55 minutes into the show. It's a way to make sure you stick with their channel, and they do it because they can.

A newspaper makes its money selling advertisements no matter what. Once the paper is sold, it's a done deal. But a broadcast station has to keep you tuned in for the entire timeslot so that you'll see their advertiser's commercials.

Use your teasers sparingly, but effectively, and you'll find the public has fun with your piece, and might take the action you desire on your product or services. If you feel better sticking with what's safe, then adhere to the Five W's, and allow the editor to come up with a more enticing lead.

Formatting Fundamentals – Following the Rules of Conformity

Each and every day, you follow certain formatting criteria. Whether you're jotting down a note to a family member, or sending an email to your boss, you probably follow some general method of placing and styling your words.

Most media departments require their reporters and freelancers to follow particular guidelines for submissions before they will even consider reviewing your work. In fact, most are so eager to ensure that everything stays within their procedures, that they will send you a copy of their guidelines, or a stylebook, for *free*!

Additionally, most media will send you a sample of their publication for a nominal fee, along with the guidelines. If you look in any Writer's Market, which includes submission rules for almost every print media in existence, you'll find that most *strongly suggest* that you send off for their guidelines, and review a current copy of the publication, before you put your ideas in the mail.

The same holds true for any press release. Even though it is a news item, presumably void of any boasting or advertising mechanisms, each publication will have its own style and tone of writing the news.

A stylebook will answer any questions you have as to the publication's preferred way of writing. It will tell you if the editor wants the number twelve written in word form, or numbers (12).

Notes

It will inform you as to whether or not possible compound words are to be combined, or hyphenated.

A stylebook also addresses specific word choice questions that will tell you if the targeted media fancies the word Vietnam or the words Viet Nam. It tackles issues such as capitalization, title specifics, time, dates, and names.

Even if a publication doesn't have any required formatting guidelines, be sure to adhere to some type of professional style, so that your submission will project a more qualified appearance.

Here are some indispensable rules of conformity that will ensure you have the basics down before you launch your press release campaign into existence:

Disclose Your Distribution

Whether it's an article or a press release, the media want to be the first to receive and dispense the news. One very important aspect in delivering your release is to state on the cover whether or not you have simultaneously submitted your information to others.

No publication wants to print the same item that another one is printing at the same time, or worse, *before* them. The idea behind the media is to be the first, and be the best. Depending on whom you talk to, you'll find that normally, it's perfectly fine to send your item to more than one publication, *as long as you disclose it.* That way, you're giving ample notice to the recipients that they might want to find out if another source has published it first.

The news industry is highly competitive, and as such, you have a responsibility to adhere to their courtesies as well as their formatting principals. Some may insist on being the sole addressee for your item. If so, weigh the options you have, and decide if it's best to stick to a sole source, or submit it to more than one publication. Whatever you do, do *not* lie to them and sneak off additional copies to their competitors. If word gets back to the original source, you can count yourself (and the company for which you're writing), out of any future publishing credentials with that particular media.

If you find that your news item is one that should be submitted to only one source at a time, then prepare a list, in order of importance, of whom you wish to have first dibs on your publishing rights. Submit to only one at a time, but make it clear that you will submit to other publishers if you don't receive timely notification of their intent to publish. If the publisher declines your press release, or your time limit expires, feel free to submit it to the next in line. Always include a Self Addressed Stamped Envelope (SASE) to each publication, to make it

Notes

easier for them to respond. Not all editors will waste their own materials in getting back to you.

If this is not practical because the information is of a time-sensitive nature, you probably should submit to multiple publications at the same time. But again, be sure to disclose this to each publication.

Additionally, some media will be perfectly at ease with you submitting the story to two different forms of media outlets. Most print publications will be content if you send one copy to the local newspaper, and another to the top radio station in your area.

Perfect Your Timing

When delivering a press release to the media, it's very important to ensure your timing is perfect. Not only when the paper or other form of media might have the best use for it, but also what works for your news.

If the company that's hired you is launching a new website or product on July 31st, don't wait until that day to send in your press release. Send it in early enough so that the editor has plenty of time to decide if he wants to use the story on the day of, or the day before, the debut. The editor may need time to verify your facts and sources, or simply rewrite certain parts of your press release to conform to their own style and format.

Since you never know what the editor will decide, avoid using terms like "today," or "tomorrow," in your submission. Instead, use specific dates, such as March 3. If you're not sure what the typical lead time is, in other words, how far in advance the editor prefers to have the story in his hands, make a quick call and find out. Most staff members are very familiar with the deadlines and turnaround time the paper needs to develop its stories.

Give Me My Space, Please!

Scientists say that humans need at least three feet of personal space to be at a maximum comfort level. Well, press releases need space, too! It may seem excessive when printed out on paper, but an editor will greatly appreciate it if you format your page so that it allows for double, if not, triple spacing.

When an editor receives your story, reviews it, and decides that he wants to look into it further, he needs to have space on your printed copy to make notes, changes, and additions to your work. Your paperwork will probably be moving between personnel, so it's a great idea to give them room to work!

Paper quality should be considered as well. Use a standard white 8½ by 11-inch (A4 in Europe or Australasia) high quality

Notes

bond paper. Type your submission in 12-point font, in a style that is easy to read, such as Times New Roman. Print your press release on a desk-jet or laser quality printer for the best appearance.

Position your story a third of the way down the page, after presenting your contact information, headings, and specific dates. Once you begin your main content, make sure you left-justify your work so that the editor has room in the right margin to make further notations, if necessary.

Always maintain at least a one-inch margin on every edge of the paper. If your press release has more than one page, be sure to write “continued,” or “more,” at the bottom of each previous page.

If you do wind up with more than one page, be sure to identify your work on each additional page by writing your last name, and the title of the story in the upper left-hand corner. If you want to, you can also number the pages, beginning on page two of your submission.

When you have more than one page, *use* more than one page to print on! Never send your work printed on both sides of the paper. And remember, as netiquette rules suggest, never type in all capital letters. It’s considered shouting, and for print work, it makes it difficult to read.

When you write your press release, conclude it by typing “-30-” immediately under the text of your press release (not at the bottom of the page). This is not a page number, but standard news protocol to indicate the end of an article, and will show the editor that you are familiar with their procedures, and offer a bit of credibility to your submission.

Stick to the elementary formatting, and you’ll keep the editor’s eyes happy.

Dot Your “i’s” and Cross Your “t’s”

You wouldn’t believe the quality of content editors receive in the pile of press releases sitting in their in-box every day. Here are some things to double-check before you submit your work for publication:

<u>Proper Addressing</u>

First, is your work addressed to the correct person, and is your own contact information correct? One critical mistake some inexperienced writers make is addressing their work to the wrong person.

Worse, some even send it to a staff member who hasn’t worked for the publication in years! An editor can only assume your

Notes

work is sloppy if you fail to make a quick phone call to verify your contact information.

Spelling & Grammar

It's baffling to think that someone actually submits a press release without taking the time to run a quick spell-check on it before presenting it for publication.

Have you used your spell-checker, and then reviewed the document with your own eyes for proper word usage? Be sure to watch out for words that the computerized spell-checker might not catch.

Many spell checkers miss certain errors, so it's ultimately up to you to ensure the proper spelling, word selection, and verbiage are used throughout the piece. For instance, you might have typed:

> "The **reign** poured **of** the roof and into the flowerbed below."

When you really meant to say:

> "The **rain** poured **off** the roof and into the flowerbed below."

Some other common mistakes are "there" versus "their," "it's" versus "its," "your" versus "you're," and "for" versus "four." If you mean to say, "***For*** the next two years," make sure it doesn't read "***Four*** the next two years."

Always check both your spelling and word usage. Then have another person read your press release before sending it in, to catch any errors that you might have missed.

Consistent Tense

Did you use the right tense and keep it uniform throughout the press release? Try to keep your press release in the Active voice. Instead of using the Passive voice, saying: "A meeting will be held on Monday night," try using "The organization will meet on Monday night."

Acronyms & Abbreviations

Are your abbreviations (if used) correct? Many organizations use acronyms, so the media have devised a way to employ the practice in their reporting. The general rule is to completely spell out the name on the initial reference, such as: Federal Bureau of Investigation, followed by the acronym FBI in any following mentions of the organization throughout the story.

Notes

Capitalization

Have you capitalized proper nouns and brand names? Always avoid capitalizing any words that do not require it. Use capitals for proper nouns, names, and specific popular areas that the community will generally understand as being a certain region.

Handling Numbers

Are any numbers, lower than 10 spelled out in word form? One rule of thumb for numerical references is that very small and very large numbers are never written in figure format.

Instead of writing "1" you would write "one." And you would refer to fifteen thousand in word form, not as 15,000.

Handling Dates

Have you excluded the use of any time specific words, such as "today" or "tomorrow?" If you accidentally include the use of one of these types of words, it will usually be eliminated from the content.

The only time it is appropriate to use these is when a media sector is speaking of something that has already happened. Normally, this occurs in an afternoon paper, which reports on the happenings that took place earlier in the day.

Courtesy Titles

Are your courtesy titles for each person mentioned in your press release correct? For example, are you correct in assuming it is "Mrs." instead of "Ms."?

Most media currently avoid the use of courtesy titles, preferring instead to simply refer to the person as "Jane Doe," initially, and "Doe" from that point on in the story. But, depending on your target media's guidelines, you'll need to make sure that if you did use courtesy titles, that you've used them properly.

Gender Neutral Terms

Have you omitted any use of sexist language, such as police***man*** or fire***man***, and instead, made them gender-neutral?

Traditionally, certain jobs were gender-specific, such as those on the police force or fire fighting staff. Now, a firefighter can be male or female, so the title has evolved to reflect the new change.

Notes

Spare Me the Adjective

Have you succeeded in not using any words of fluff that would make your work appear to be biased to the public, such as "best," or "wonderful?"

One of the biggest mistakes public relations departments make when submitting a press release, in hopes of getting news coverage, is in turning their "news" into an "advertisement." Look at your press release from the public viewpoint, and see if you think they might view any information you've added as being biased rather than objective.

Wrap It Up!

Formatting doesn't end with font styles and page settings. Sending in your submission has a rule of its own, and everyone should follow the basic procedure courtesies.

If your press release is more than one page in length, never ever staple your pages together. Either number your pages with proper identification (in case any page gets separated from the others), or use a paper clip to fasten them to one another. A staple is only going to make the editor either rip the pages apart, or go through the hassle of trying to find a staple remover on his already-cluttered desk of unsolicited submissions.

There is no need to send your work in any fancy method. Unless it's a time-sensitive piece, don't use overnight carriers that will require personnel-specific signatures. Simply use standard sized packaging, and refrain from writing messages on the outside of the envelope – it either won't be read, or it will make an unprofessional impression.

Proper formatting is the easiest way to gain the trust of an editor. If everything looks good from first glance, then you've gotten over the first hurdle.

Press Release Placement

Finding the Perfect Medium

Finding the perfect medium for your press release is as simple as figuring out your target market. The good thing about a media release is that it can take many different forms and be sent to a variety of media outlets.

Here, we'll address the various forms of media, and how they might benefit your ultimate goals and strategies.

Notes

Newspaper

This is the source most people think of when we speak about submitting a press release. It's the oldest form of communication in civilized societies across the world. Some people think the newspaper is a widely outdated form of communication, and that the number of readers diminishing will ultimately be the downfall of the paper entirely.

There are many different forms of newspapers depending on the region you're seeking to publish in. If you or your client is large enough, like IBM or Starbucks, then you have a chance at making national headlines when you have something of importance to say that will affect the country's readership.

If you are able to send press information to one of the national publications, such as USA Today, or possibly a city-specific paper that has a national following, such as the Washington Post or New York Times, chances are, someone on their staff already has their eye on *you*. The sooner you form an amicable relationship with one of the staff, the more smoothly your press release will be processed in the news department.

The Associated Press (AP) is the main conglomerate when it comes to media publication. Almost every paper in the country, from large nationwide papers, to small community setups, has a direct link to the AP for the most prominent news available. If the story you're delivering has local implications, you can look up the AP bureau for your state in the state's capitol.

However, if you have impending information that is suitable for national headlines, you can send your press release to AP's General/National Desk or International Desk at Associated Press, 50 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10020. This news wire feeds 24 hours a day into most news departments around the world, so your item, if applicable to their audience, will be picked up immediately.

Of course, if you only have reason to publish in the local paper, by all means, send it to the correct editor of that publication first. Most larger newspapers are now published free online, in addition to their print counterparts, so don't be disappointed by the statistics that warn of the decline of print journalism. It isn't going anywhere anytime soon.

Television

Perhaps the most influential of all of the media, television allows its audience to experience news in the most realistic way. When we turn on the TV, a reporter stands in the midst of the scene, allowing us to hear, see, and feel (emotionally) what is going on around him.

Notes

His description of the events cannot compare to what our own eyes and ears consume. Thankfully, news shows don't *only* have to report on the worst life has to offer. They bring us the news about everything that will directly impact our lives in the timeliest fashion.

Like an editor in the print media, a producer will be the one who decides what is newsworthy to his audience. But for a producer, the value doesn't end there. A producer wants to know if there is live footage he can shoot when the report is brought to the eyes of the public.

Is there any way for him to directly interview one of your contact sources for his show? Even better, can it be an exclusive? News competition is fierce, with some starting their broadcast earlier than others, just to be the first to bring you the information.

Local news is dramatically different from cable news channels. Stations such as CNN, a 24-hour news source headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, have up-to-the-minute coverage of everything from International terrorism to sports and entertainment, and are strong competition for local channels. If your news makes it on CNN, chances are, it'll be on your local channel later that evening.

Like the newspaper outlet, television stations have current, constantly-updated Internet websites devoted to keeping their customers informed at all times. If your media release makes it to the news, then it will also probably be included on their main website as well.

Since the producers are trying to keep their audience tuned in to see their advertisers, the press release introductions they receive will be written in a completely different style than the print form. In a print form, you have to get to the point quickly, in order to maintain your reader's interest, and keep them tuned into your message.

The opposite is true for a television broadcast. It's unlikely that any reporter is going to tell you all of the facts in their very first sentence, when they could string you along for the rest of the broadcast.

The producers are much more concerned with the live feed going into your home than they are the actual content, although that, too, is of great importance. A producer's job is to bring the news to the public in an interesting, aesthetically pleasing method. So he has to concentrate on putting a scene together with your content.

Notes

Internet

The Internet has a tremendous impact on the reach of the media. Not only do traditional media outlets utilize the far-reaching grasp of the Internet to feed their audience on a constant basis, but there are also thousands of other Internet-based organizations that provide the public with information without the means of print or video feed.

PR Web™ (PRWeb.com) is one of the Internet's most popular press release Newswire services and provides free global news distribution services. Besides accepting free submissions of your press release, they ensure that it is listed with the major search engines, and have special agreements in place that make it possible to inject your press release directly into the press releases section of the Yahoo News site. PR Web™ also manages their own syndicated network news feeds and employs third party syndicates to assist in distributing your news release.

As with the design of any web page, it is important to consider keyword density and keyword placement in any press release that you intend to have distributed via the Internet.

Another good place to start is with each Internet Service Provider (ISP) that you can think of. For instance, when a member signs onto America Online (AOL), the first screen to pop up is an interactive news source. Usually, they tend to concentrate on entertainment, but that all depends on which Service Provider you're targeting.

MSN.com, for instance, greets its members with the latest interesting news feature. And from there, members can click on the item of choice that interests them, therefore, customizing their news.

More and more sites now offer a running banner of news for their customers, feeding our insatiable appetite for live feeds into the most fascinating aspects of our world.

The Internet not only provides you with a basic format to spread the word of your news, but it allows you to present that information in a variety of ways. Text is almost always accompanied by another means of communication, such as audio or video stream, graphics, or pictures.

This method of media distribution means your viewers will be able to learn more with the click of a button. You can link them back to your website, where it's a good idea to store a page of recent press release information, or other announcements. Or, provide your viewers a chat or message area so that you can gauge the consumer's reaction to your press release on the spot.

Notes

In order to participate at the maximum capacity in the Internet world of news, it's best if you stay up-to-date on your technology and cater your news to the people who might be viewing it online – educated, white-collar workers who are looking for fast information, with a high-quality feel to it.

If you're technology-impaired, now is the time to sign up for a class and learn the ins and outs of basic Internet communication. The World Wide Web is a vast source of communication outlets that lets you reach an unlimited audience within seconds.

Magazines

Magazines, like any other media outlet, have their own rules and guidelines for submission, and they cringe whenever you embark on a path that deviates from their cause.

If you're a public relations official, you're probably used to creating a basic press release in an effort to notify the editor of your news, and let him take it from there. However, submitting your information to a magazine is more like crafting an article as an outsider.

With a press release, you're probably targeting a trade magazine – some specific publication that caters to a specialized topic of interest. For instance, if you're about to launch a new convertible solar powered car, you'll want to send it to an automobile trade magazine, not Woman's Weekly.

When you make the decision to submit to a magazine of *any* kind, go out and purchase the writer's must-have guide – *Writer's Market*. This book is updated each year to contain almost every listing you can imagine for publishers, agents, and your target – magazines.

Each year, the magazines receive a questionnaire from *Writer's Market*, which they then complete and return to the book's publishers. At press time, the magazines are divided into categories such as Women's, Trade, Romance, Mystery, etc. You simply flip to the genre of your choice, and there it will tell you all of the guidelines to follow when submitting your information.

Since magazines are looking for articles, it's great if you can simply query them with an already-completed article about the new product or service your client is offering. Like newspapers, a magazine won't be interested in an advertisement that reads, "Try the **best** face cream ever invented!" They have an ad department for this type of content, and they charge heavily for it.

Instead, approach it as a consumer information document. Do some research, compare it to the other products, but don't lie

Notes

about the results. The magazine probably has a fact-checking department that will call your bluff if you provide false information, and they may even include you in a negative article if you try anything tricky.

The most important thing to remember when approaching a magazine is *know your target*! Do not write them a stuffy business-like article if they speak in slang and poke fun of society. Request a back issue, or study their current publication to get a feel for their tone and style.

Then, make sure your idea hasn't been done before – or least, recently. If your organization is doing something beneficial for the community, such as building a home for a family who lost everything, angle your story around a person who is organizing the campaign, and send it in as a human-interest piece.

Radio

Radio is a great way for you to get a short mention or blurb in the community. It is not, however, the most effective way to reach your audience. Too many people change the station when the music stops, and the radio DJ's have to keep up a fast pace, so they don't have time to waste on one subject in particular.

Normally, it's easier to purchase radio space as an ad, rather than try to get a quick mention from the producer on your news. However, if it's an event that your company is sponsoring, it *is* a great idea to approach the station in an attempt to have them co-sponsor it.

If your company is having a fundraiser for the needy, and will have live bands and food, with family generated activities, many radio stations would love to be onsite, reporting directly from the event in an effort to interact with the community.

They gain from those situations, too, since their staff will be on hand mingling with the audience and giving away bumper stickers and t-shirts. You'll benefit because their listeners will know of your event prior to it happening, and many will attend just to be a part of the station's activities and giveaways.

Making the Choice

The perfect medium is whatever your target audience enjoys most, and what they spend the most time on. If you're seeking to target affluent individuals who are community-conscious, then the newspaper is a great way to reach them.

If the blue-collar worker might generate a more pro-active approach in benefiting from your piece, then the radio is a perfect way to interact with that sector of the community.

Notes

Everyone has different methods of communicating.

No matter what, investigate the possibility of distributing your news to as many different outlets as you can.

To that end, Dr. Kevin Nunley is a popular copywriter who provides a press release distribution service (at DrNunley.com/release.htm) that will distribute your press release to over 3,500 radio, TV, newspaper and online media sites, including a targeted list of media in your industry and a special distribution to your local media. This is not a free service, but gives you the option of having your release distribution done by a professional, and you can also purchase his copywriting skills to actually create your press release, as well.

The more people you reach, the higher the chances of success for whatever event or product you're touting.

Bear in mind that not every producer or editor will see the significance in delivering your information to his or her audience. So before you present your item to them, develop it with that particular medium in mind.

Manipulating the Media

Channel Your Document to the Right Person

Imagine you're sitting at your editor's desk, wearing your editor's hat, dreading the trip through the onslaught of unsolicited materials, including press releases from all four corners of the world. Now, you know the competition is fierce for a spot in your publication, and you hate the thought of having to pick and choose.

Not hardly. A real editor has the ability to swiftly peruse his stack of incoming mail; rapidly discarding anything that doesn't fit the general criteria he looks for in a newsworthy item.

Eventually, the crumpled papers surrounding the trash bin outnumber the ones on his desk, and he smiles with pleasure at the thought of being *almost* finished, nary a thought in his mind about the poor schmuck who worked day and night on his press release in the hopes that his idea would be printed in today's edition.

Address the Right Contact!

The editor is human, regardless of the rumors that say otherwise, and he appreciates hard work and dedication similar to the ethics he puts into his own work. Therefore, when he opens up your letter and sees it addressed to Joe Smith, the

Notes

editor whose job he took eight months ago, he's not happy with you from the beginning.

His eyes will roll, and he may guffaw at the lack of research you've done in seeing who to address your press release to. But more importantly, he's going to attach a label of "sloppy" to your work, because he's wondering – "If this person can't even get *my name* right, which appears on the masthead of yesterday's edition, how can I trust that he's taken the time to verify his facts and source credentials?"

He can't. So off you fly, crumpled in a ball the size of a small apple, rebounding off the wall of his office, directly into the trash bin.

Newspapers are probably the easiest source to research when sending your press release in for publication. Open up the latest edition, and somewhere in a long, vertical stream, are the most prominent contacts you'll need when you fill out the envelope to send your news.

If the masthead has been ripped from the rest of the paper, a simple phone call to the main number will result in a speedy delivery of the proper name and address to send your press release.

But before you hang up with the paper, get the correct spelling of your contact's name. And if it's Sam, Chris, Alex, or some other gender-neutral name, make sure you know if the person is male or female, in case your cover needs to be addressed to Mr. or Ms.

For a newspaper, you'll either be asked to send your press release to a department (in which case you won't have a specific person to target) or there will be one or more staff members assigned with the duty of receiving and processing your press release.

Once you've sent in your item to the correct person, resist the urge to call them to see if they got your letter, or whether or not they think they might use it in the next edition. If it's a newspaper, chances are, they're busy all of the time, so your call will not endear you to them, but rather, make them intolerant of you. They'll be *more* impressed if you control your urge to contact them and harass them about your document.

When you address your press release to specific personnel, it's important to check for the following:

- Is your letter addressed to the right contact?
- Is the contact name spelled correctly?
- Is the person's title right?
- Is the publication's name spelled correctly?
- Is the address up to date?

Notes

- Are you sending it in the right format – print, disk, or email, and does it appear to be professional, and not too flashy or distracting?
- Is your document spell checked and double-checked by your eyes for word selection?

When you look at the masthead of a publication, don't just pull a name from the top of the list and send your press release to the most important looking person. If you do this, you run the risk of either having your document thrown away immediately, or being sent to the lowest assistant on the staff for further review. That person likely won't have the experience you want to be handling your information.

Find out which person handles those items first. Be specific. Don't just address your letter to "Editor." There are probably several different editors at the publication, so this isn't enough of a distinction.

For example, a publication might have a features editor, health editor, entertainment editor, and several associate editors who field unsolicited submissions. Call the editorial department and ask the person who answers the phone "Which editor handles (x topic)?"

Make sure they know you're not out to speak to that editor, as they've been well trained to screen your call. Instead, let them know you only need it for submission purposes.

Have them spell out the name, no matter how simple it may sound. "Susie" can also be spelled "Suzie," while "Mellisa" can be spelled "Melissa." There are too many variations nowadays for you to take a chance that your preference is the right one. Spelling clarifies this, and keeps you from the fearful trash fate.

Make sure the publication's name and address is correct as well. These are always changing hands, so make sure the office you're sending your submission to is the one that handles your intended target publication. Some companies own more than one major publication, so make sure you specify which publication you want to reach before you send it.

<u>Just Once</u>

Also, don't send in more than one version of your document to the publication. This means two things:

Don't rewrite a "better" version and mail several samples to the paper. And…

Don't send your submission in five different ways, by hand delivering it, emailing it, snail mailing it, faxing it, and calling it in. Pick one method of delivery and stay with it.

Notes

<u>In the Right Format</u>

Find out how they prefer to hear from you. Some publications require a printed copy of your work for consideration. Others, a quick email to the appropriate staff. And still others want it on a disk sent to their office for review. Have your document readily available in all formats, but send it in their preferred format.

Finding the Right Channels for Broadcast Media

In radio and television, there isn't a readily available masthead for you to find where to submit your piece, as there is in a newspaper or magazine. Don't send in your press release to the broadcast journalist who actually sits behind the desk and reads the news.

They will not open your letter on the air and read your information to the public. They have a system you must go through, and if you make the cut, you can watch in amazement as they tell the public all about your news.

In this case, you'll have to phone the station to find out what the proper channels of submission are. You may be able to find out through their website, but a phone call will be more effective.

Where to Submit via the Internet

Determining where to submit to websites is more like the print media in that the Internet outlets will more than likely have an email contact for you to send your news. It may be a specific contact, or a general webmaster, depending on the site, but a quick search on the site should lead you in the right direction.

Some websites, such as <u>InternetNews.com</u>, <u>PRWeb.com</u>, or <u>PRNewswire.com</u> provide up to the minute information with an easy way of finding who to submit your news to. The page is set up so that you can tailor your news around the subjects you're interested in.

Want to know what's going on in the Business World? They have a link to it. International News? Click the link to find out more. And best of all, they have a staff page, brimming with links and titles of the most current members of their team, who are just waiting to hear from you.

Now, the links to each staff member's email don't specify who handles press releases, but it makes it very easy to contact an assistant and request the information. And if you don't hear back in a timely manner, then try contacting another person – just don't email them all at one time with a copy of your press release.

Notes

Remember, they probably work in the same vicinity, and if they compare notes, you might end up blacklisted from further consideration. This doesn't happen often, but if you become a pest, or are over-zealous about your work to the point that you're interfering with their work, you might find yourself the outcast of media contacts.

These PR sites distribute your media releases to journalists who subscribe to their email or RSS syndication feeds as a source of news.

Introduce Yourself

When you send in your press release to the proper personnel, always include a cover letter. Make your proposal brief and clear. Be sure to let the editor or other staff member know when the information is supposed to be used – normally, you should print "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" somewhere on the document itself so that they know it's ready for print.

In your cover letter, quickly sketch out your reason for sending the document to the editor. Tell him why it's new information, timely, and pertinent to his audience. If you have any statistics, keep them simple, but utilize them to your advantage.

The best thing to do when submitting your document for possible publication is to pick up the phone and make a quick call for verification. Yes, it might be a long-distance charge. But isn't it worth it if it gets you a space in the next day's edition?

Most people in the decision-making positions have been exactly where you are now. They've had to do the legwork in order to find the right contacts, the right audience, and the right medium for their work. And having gone through those trials and tribulations, they aren't willing to let you get off easy by ignoring the proper journalistic etiquette.

Show them that you care about the subject matter you're proposing by doing your homework and submitting it, not only to the right personnel, but in the right format as well. Your efforts will not go un-rewarded; especially if you bear in mind all of the other submissions that will be emptied out with the trash at the end of the day for not following proper guidelines.

Nurture the Relationship

Once you establish yourself as a credible writer with your local media contacts, they'll be readily available to you for future newsworthy events.

Make sure they have your business card, and keep them updated frequently on upcoming news you think they might want to cover. If you happen to form an alliance with one

Notes

media contact in particular, offer exclusive coverage to that publication. This will be looked upon as very favorable in their eyes, as you've allowed them access to information no other competitor will have.

In the end, be persistent yet polite while dealing with your media contacts. Don't be put off if someone answers the phone in a grumpy mood. The news business is a very hectic profession, filled with deadlines and trying to outdo one another.

Be understanding and patient when dealing with your contacts, and offer them a friendly shoulder to deal with every chance you get. That way, when they answer the phone and find out it's you; they'll breath a sigh of relief and take the time to address your questions and concerns.

Noteworthy News

Tracking Your Results

Congratulations! You've learned how to write, direct, and distribute your press release for maximum exposure in any medium you see fit. What comes next? Well, in order to see how effective your press release campaign has been, you have to monitor the market for your message.

Don't worry, you won't have to pull out your phone list and dial up every editor or staff member to whom you submitted the document. There are two simple ways for you to oversee your campaign without resorting to bothering your contacts. After all, you may need them again in the very near future, so you want to stay on friendly terms.

The first way you can keep tabs on your news is to do it yourself. Watch every program, pick up every edition of each publication, and listen to the radio at all times. Not very feasible?

Maybe if you only have one or two outlets, but if you distributed your press release to more than one media contact, and even worse, more than one *type* of media, you have a problem if you intend to try to monitor all of those avenues single-handedly.

If your efforts were for a client, they will be checking with you shortly after you distribute the release to see what the results have been. If you want to keep working for them, you'll need to show how effective you've been in getting their company or organization a piece of the media pie.

Notes

If you do have the luxury of only monitoring one target, you'll still have to work hard to make sure you catch any mention of your work in their publication. It might be easy to monitor a written publication, but if you sent your release to a radio or television station, it's virtually impossible to listen 100% of the time.

Therefore, the best option you have in keeping track of your press release is to hire someone to do it for you. There are hundreds of services that do nothing but watch, listen, and read the media reports for any remote mention of your company or organization.

Yes, it costs money. But actually, it's a nominal fee when you compare the cost of tuning in 24 hours a day, or worse, losing a client because you couldn't prove how beneficial you've been in obtaining press space for their needs.

Some clipping services specialize in local area coverage. For instance, Gnusman.com caters to those who want to monitor Santa Barbara subscription-based media publications. They provide their clients with a mailed or faxed clipping packet every Monday and Thursday that contains all of the clips within your target subject matter. Their subjects include:

- City and/or County Government News
- Environmental News
- Marine News
- Oil & Gas News
- Water News
- Court and Crime News
- Education News
- Local political races
- Custom

Many cities around the country have a personalized clipping service (or more) at their disposal. The subject headings may change, but the point is, you have access to local clips regarding your information.

What does something like this cost? Gnusman.com has a monthly fee that ranges from $50 to $85 per month. Not bad for complete coverage of the entire Santa Monica area, including Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo County newspapers.

But what if your news reaches beyond the scope of your local clipping service? Well, there are options for everyone. And they're all as close as your personal computer. Some of the most prominent clipping services are:

- Newsdesk.com touts itself as "the premier news and information network for the hi-tech, healthcare, entertainment and transport sectors – the

Notes

communications bridge between the world's PR professionals and the journalists world-wide who they aim to influence."

The cost is not openly displayed on the site, but usually it will depend on the difficulty they'll have in tracking your message, and the subject matter and publications you're targeting.

- DowJones.com allows you to sign up and tailor your news to your specifications. Their counterpart, http://bis.dowjones.com integrates content from the top national newspapers, Dow Jones & Reuters newswires, business journals, market reports, and websites. They charge an annual password fee, plus additional fees for viewing articles from the CustomClips service.

- NewsEdge.com caters to "Time-strapped CEOs who need mission critical intelligence to gain the competitive edge." They filter thousands of news stories daily for the most relevant documentation, and then deliver it to your desktop to keep you ahead of your competitors.

- BusinessWire.com offers non-journalists a chance to sign up for NewsTrak, a fee-based service that includes personalized Business Wire headlines and additional news sources. NewsTrak is customized to show only the news releases that you need to see based on the profile you complete.

While the releases are segmented into seven industries on the public site, they are not further divided into the news category headings that you are able to select in your profile. NewsTrak stores your news for 30 days.

- Bacons.com offers standard clipping services, which cater to the more traditional methods of monitoring your news, NetClips – Internet clipping with e-mail and website delivery, Electronic Clipping – Database retrieval delivered daily by e-mail, ExpressClips, which delivers an email every morning with clipping from the top dailies and magazines, and a Clip Analysis - Clip measurement reports on your standard clipping account coverage.

Almost every clipping service varies when it comes to their rates. No two sites are alike, but be forewarned that it will cost more to monitor major publications than it will to oversee your own backyard media.

Another important reason to use clipping services is because they provide you with any mention of your competitors. Having up-to-date information on your competition is paramount in any

Notes

industry. You need to know if one of their products is about to be launched head-to-head against your own.

Clipping services provide a more thorough account of all of your media coverage than you could ever hope for. They keep a watch on newspapers, magazines, radio, television, Internet, Usenet, Trade Journals, and everything in between.

Paying for the privilege of having targeted news delivered to your in-box every morning, or several times a week, will pay off in the long run, because you'll reap the rewards immediately by seeing how effective your press release campaign was in garnering the attention and coverage you're after.

Another way you'll know if your campaign was successful is when the phone starts ringing off the hook. Reporters will be calling because they saw the information somewhere else, but now *they* want to do a story on your client or company.

It's a pleasure to form a working relationship with the media, once you master their methods of interaction and communication.

It sometimes gets a bad rap, as editors and writers face off as opponents in the writing process. But in reality, the two of you are working together to do one thing – get your message out. You have news that needs to be heard. The editor has an audience that wants to hear some news. Work together to make it happen.

You do your part by developing the idea, the story, and the meaty details of the content. The editor will do his part by spicing it up in a way the public is used to seeing – he'll throw in a splashing headline to turn heads in the audience.

The media is not a one-way production company. They rely on you and your clients to provide them with the very news that sells their papers, and pays their salaries. It's not that they're seeking to deny your submission.

They'd like nothing better than to have a stack piled to the ceiling of news they could run with - without revisions. But that's not the case, and so they suffer burnout when it comes time to review the stack of unsolicited news rising from their desks.

Take pity on your editor and cater to his ego and his mindset. Empathize with him when he growls at you for not following his guidelines. Don't argue with him about the policies of the paper. He has no time to change policies in mid-stream, he's just concerned with making it by his two o'clock deadline later that afternoon.

Notes

Use the Golden Rule when dealing with the hurried news personnel on the other end of the phone. No matter how they treat you when you call to verify a contact name, inquire about the stylebook, or ask a question they've already been asked 2,000 times that day, treat them with respect and kindness, and they *will* appreciate it and return the favor.

Your most important weapon in increasing your chances of being published, is knowing your target.

- Know the facts.
- Know the people.
- Know their audience.
- Know when to submit.
- Know what to say, and how to say it.
- Know when not to say anything.
- Know how to do it right, but know how to do it differently.
- Stand out, but be uniform at the same time.
- Know as much as you possibly can.

Never be intimidated by the prospect of developing and distributing a press release. The worst thing that can happen is you don't get published. If that happens, try your news from another angle.

Revisit your publication target and learn even *more*. Talk to others who have made it, and find out what tactics they use in communicating with the same media contacts. Network your skills, your availability, and your know-how.

Notes

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Develop a credible reputation with your media, and you'll have your foot in the door to one of the most powerful communication tools mankind has ever seen. Once there, maximize your message, and keep in tune with the audience and the editors
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Public Relations Self-Assessment Questions

1. Find the names and contact from your local paper information of at least two of the writers most apt to be interested in your press release. Find at least two writers. You want phone, email, and fax numbers. Most writers are listed on the website online.

2. Go back and search for articles written by those writers in the past 3-6 months. Note down how they approach a topic: personal interest, factual, case study or hard news. Write key quotes from each story.

3. What are three hooks you could use to promote your info product? Look back at the information you found on the writers. How could you refine that hook?

4. Using the press release format write a press release for each hook.

5. Call the newspaper and ask for the assignment desk. Ask how each of the writers you have chosen prefer to be contacted. Be ready to tell your story quickly to the assignment editor if asked. Contact the person the way they prefer to be contacted.

6. Watch local TV news. Find out the names of the reporters most apt to be interested in your story. Get their contact information. Again the station website will generally have the information.

7. Think of how your story hook could best be 'seen.' What are three hooks you could use? Does this fit the style of the reporters you have chosen?

8. Write a press release for each hook and tailor it to the reporters you have targeted.

9. Send your press release to the reporters you have targeted.

Next . . . Social Proof

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Launching With Style

Module 9

Section 8: Social Proof

By Alysan Delaney-Childs

Info Product Blueprint was created by
Kenneth A. McArthur

Alysan Delaney-Childs, Project Manager and Editor
Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

Social Proof

You've gone through each step of your Info Product Blueprint to create your product. Your plans are almost complete. But like a developer building a house it's now time for the finishing details and to sell your product.

What you will learn in this Section:

- The six principles of influence
- How influence is used in sales and marketing
- How to stage your info product for sales using the principles of influence.
- Tips on using each of the six principles for your info product.

Staging to Sell

Ever gone to a new housing development and toured a model home? From the time the salesperson opens the door the home is designed to persuade you to buy. The wall color, furniture and accessories have been carefully chosen. The lighting shows everything to its best advantage. As you wander from room to room you start to see yourself living in this beautiful house. You want to make it your home. In the real estate business it's called staging to sell. In sales it's called persuasion in action.

You can stage your info product to sell; it's all a matter of learning and using persuasive skills. Much as the model home staging led you from room to room, persuasion can led your visitor from step to step in the sale of your info product. These techniques can influence your visitor to buy from you.

Learn The Theory Behind Persuasion

Influence is defined "to move or impel (a person) to some action" (Dictionary.com). Your goal is get your visitor to take action and buy your info product. Learning some theory behind influence can help you in staging your info product. Dr. Robert Cialdini a social psychologist at Arizona State has extensively studied how people influence others.

In addition to the usual lab experiments and interviews, Dr. Cialdini became an employee-trainee in a variety of sales, advertising, fundraising and pr organizations. By actually working with people who use influence for a living he was able to closely observe the techniques of influence in action. This gave him access to training, manuals and observation of influence in action. Dr. Cialdini also interviewed the regulatory people such as police and consumer agencies for the

Notes

organizations that use influence. His book *Influence: Science and Practice* is considered to be the reference standard on influence especially social proof

Notes

Increasing Sales Through Influence

During his on-the-job studies, Dr. Cialdini discovered six principles used in one form or another in every organization he observed. This was true whether it was a company selling vacuum cleaners or a fundraiser for a charitable organization. Using these principles can help you stage the sale of your info product. If you overuse them your visitor can see your copy as being manipulative and worse. You become the stereotype of the hype driven pushy salesperson.

Using metrics and testing conversion is very important with influence techniques. Some techniques work better than others in a particular niche market. The only way you will know which techniques work is to test and see which techniques convert more visitors into customers.

A forced squeeze page, where you make the visitor give their email address before receiving anything, can make some visitors click away. Check your competition. What are they doing? Imitation is not only the sincerest form of flattery, but also makes good business sense.

The six principles are as follows:

- Reciprocation
- Commitment and Consistency
- Social Proof
- Liking
- Scarcity
- Authority

Reciprocation

When someone gives us something we feel required to return the favor. The free sample or gift creates an obligation in our mind. Charitable organizations use this technique and send us free pads of personalized address labels or note cards. Reciprocation techniques increase donations and overall response when compared with just asking for a donation.

Grocers use this technique all of the time. If you shop for groceries on weekends you will see free samples of food available. This increases sales, because it triggers a feeling of obligation to buy something.

Techniques to Consider

- Offer a free report in exchange for name and email address
- Offer a no-obligation 30-day trial.
- Host a members' only event.
- Promote a full price physical product for $x, and offer a lower price for a digital version. The contrast in price will also give an incentive to buy.
- Give a free consultation in your area of expertise.
- Offer an in-depth report in exchange for a testimonial
- If you are promoting a seminar to your subscriber list, off to rebate your commission
- Have a special teleseminar with a known expert for people who refer another subscriber to your site.
- Offer bonuses with your product to increase the perceived value.

Commitment and Consistency

Consistency is the principle where value behavior that is constant. People whose behavior is inconsistent are seen as incompetent or mentally ill.

The principle of consistency has a second part of commitment. Once we form an image of ourselves in a situation or make a decision we rarely change and even defend our choice. We are committed to that decision.

You see this principle when people make a bad decision and stick with defending their choice. Ever bought a piece of very expensive item on sale that didn't work or was a bad choice? But if someone asked you about your purchase you could only talk about the great deal you got. That's commitment. You made a decision and now you defend it.

In sales, to gain commitment, you start with small decisions first. This is why car dealerships have us try out the car. We get to see ourselves in the car, feel how the car drives and experience what it would be like to own the car. Each step involves increasing commitment.

Techniques to Consider

- Start your sales process with a subscription request for newsletter
- Design your order form to have name and address before credit card information. It's less of a commitment to give your name and address than credit card information.
- Keep the look of the website consistent. Once you have chosen color and design stick with it.
- Hold a teleseminar to show your customers how to use your product. Get them involved in the process.

Notes

- Have a 90-day trial subscription to your membership site.
- Design note taking sheets for free and paid teleseminars. It fosters involvement and commitment.
- Consider charging a minimal amount for a report or teleseminar ($1-$9.95). Once a person has paid for the information they are more committed to follow through on the commitment. If you charge, you must deliver value or you will undermine your credibility.
- If you use telemarketers, have them first say, “Hello,” and ask how the person is. If the person answers, this increases sales and/or donations. The response is a commitment to the conversation.
- Hold a contest. People need to say how they would use your product. This will create a group of people who have already decided why they want your product.
- Offer a 3-payment program for your info product. It can be seen as a concession and potentially increase sales.

Social Proof

If you can convince your visitor other people want your product, you can probably convince your visitors, too. When buying we don’t want to be by ourselves or make an incorrect decision. Social proof provides that reassurance. It demonstrates ‘if other people think it’s good, it must be. It provides the buzz of product launch and continued product sales.

Life is busy today with all of us juggling family, career and the rest of life. Time is short and often we take an easy approach. If a friend or reliable source provides information about a product or service we will use the information to buy the product. It’s word of mouth marketing. Social proof requires visibility. People must see or hear the proof.

TV directors use social proof when they use laugh tracks for comedy shows. The laugh track persuades us the show is funny (or tries to).

McDonald’s Hamburgers displayed the actual number of hamburgers sold on their signs as a way of saying they were popular using it as a means of social proof. McDonald’s stopped the updating when they reached 100 billion.

Harry Potter books and movies have used the social proof technique to promote the new releases. Between midnight book parties, the best-seller lists, movie attendance records were all designed to influence and reinforce the social proof of the popularity of the products.

If you have ever bought a book on Amazon then you have seen the use of “other customers who bought this also bought...”

Notes

Info Product Blueprint

Amazon uses this social proof technique to cross-sell additional products to you.

Techniques to Consider

- Hosting a teleseminar? Have people give their name and location especially if you have people calling in from all over the world.
- Use testimonials from 'regular' 'real' people
- Have case studies of people who have used your product posted on your site or in a special report.
- Use audio and video testimonials so people can see and hear from real people
- If you have a good Alexa rating, post it on your website.
- Create a blog and encourage participation as comments add social proof.
- If you have a hot selling product or a limited number available list the number of packages sold.
- Have a huge number of people on your teleseminar call leave the line open at the beginning so people can hear the other people. Invite people to thank the guest at the end of the call. It validates that other people are interested in your product or service.
- If people buy during your teleseminar, announce their name and thank them. It reinforces social proof.
- If the amount or dollar value of your sales could influence a buying decision, then post a screen shot of a check you received or your PayPal account.
- Name drop when recruiting affiliates and JV partners. If you are able to include someone with a high name recognition use it in promotions. It attracts others who will want to participate.
- Bonus packages from multiple people imply approval. Be careful with this one as you can end up decreasing the perceived value of your product.
- Hold sales contests among JV partners. The competition is social proof.
- Use a quote in your headline from a customer telling of their success when they used your product.
- If you go to seminars, get pictures of yourself with speakers. Post them on your website or blog.
- Consider a push for best selling book from Amazon, or best selling product for ClickBank. The independent third party validates the social proof.

Liking

Liking is an important part of influence. Car manufacturers know this and use attractive people as models to influence our buying behavior.

We want to say, "Yes," to someone we know and like. By showing your similarities with your target niche, you can influence the buying decision. People buy from people they

Notes

know like and trust. Brian Edmondson talks about building a list you can connect with, people who share similar opinions, personality and background.

Tupperware has used this strategy for years. A friend invites a friend to the Tupperware party. Because of the friendship the person attends. Cialdini's 'Influence' describes in greater detail the dynamics of the Tupperware party.

Techniques to Consider

- Use a 'tell a friend' script for people to refer other people to your site. Make it easy to use.
- Personalize your emails. Share stories of your life and changes in it.
- Post a picture of yourself smiling on your site. Smiles increase likeability.
- Let your subscriber list know when you are attending seminars so they have an opportunity to meet you.
- Use niche market research to develop your product and website. Custom tailor the product to your market.
- Use keywords in your copy. These are the words people are using to search so include them in your copy.
- Create a blog. Use it to chat about your product, your other subscribers.
- Use polls to involve your subscribers. Then use the information to improve your site or develop the product. Let your subscribers or customers know you used their advice.
- Recognize and reward your subscribers and customers. Report on their successes in your emails or blog.

Scarcity

The principle of scarcity says we value things that are rare or hard to get. We think they are worth more. Ever stand in line to go to the first showing of a new movie? Like the Harry Potter or other big buzz movies? Or get up at 4 am to buy an early bird special the day after Thanksgiving. If you have you have been influenced by the scarcity principle.

Many marketers use scarcity or implied scarcity successfully. The collectibles market has been driven by this principle. Whether it is Beanie Babies, coin collections, art lithographs or limited edition cars, we value what is limited.

Tune to any of the home shopping networks and you will see the scarcity principle shown. The host gives the minute-by-minute update of the number of items left in stock. The countdown timer gives the minutes left for the sale of that

Notes

particular item. You will also see an updated number of the number of items left in certain sizes or styles. In many cases it is implied scarcity, as you can get the products on back order.

<u>Techniques to Consider</u>

- Offer early mover bonuses on launch day
- Announce change in price on 'x' date
- Say the offer maybe withdrawn without notice
- Tell your visitor that 'x' others have signed up for the prelaunch so it's important to be online at x time.
- If you have a limited number of packages, countdown the number left. (Only do this if they are moving)
- Use the one time offers (OTO's) strategy. "Buy now or lose out."
- Use exclusive pre-launch notification lists
- Write copy to tell the visitor what they will lose by not buying today/now

Authority

Authority maintains society with rules and laws. Titles, uniforms and symbols all are a big part of the principle of authority. In a chaotic situation, authority maintains consistency and order. Police officers wear uniforms so they are easily recognized as authority figures in emergencies and enforcement situations.

Uniforms and symbols play a big part in our recognition of authority. Empty police cars are used to deter speeding motorists. Patients feel their doctor knows more when wearing a white lab coat and carrying a stethoscope. Symbols such as the Better Business Bureau shield, the iCop logo, and the yellow lock icon for secure pages are all recognized symbols, which confirm authority.

You can demonstrate your authority directly or gain authority by association. Simply either be an expert or associate with experts.

<u>Techniques to Consider</u>

- Write a book.
- Use endorsements from celebrities
- Write articles to get your name out and you will be recognized as an authority.
- List your credentials if they are related to your niche.
- If you are in a conservative niche, wear a suit in your photo. The suit says authority and expertise.
- Get interviewed as a guest on a teleseminar.
- Give a presentation on your niche at a seminar or meeting.
- Post pictures of yourself at seminars with speakers.

Notes

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Your Use Of The Influence Principles

The principles of influence are powerful tools. They can work very effectively in marketing and selling your products. These are the same tools used in brainwashing and cult programming. Like anything it is your choice in how you use them.

Using the principles of influence needs to be a part of your info product sales and promotion. Take a lesson from successful real estate developers complete the blueprint and stage your info product to sell.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Social Proof Self-Assessment Questions

1. Print out your sales letter. Using the list of principles here, label each strategy you have chosen to use. Have you covered all of the principles?

____
____
____
____
____

2. What do you need to add to your sales letter and marketing plan to better stage your info product?

____
____
____
____
____

3. Take out your calendar. Write the target dates for getting the other techniques completed and available to use.

____
____
____
____
____

Next . . . What Can Go Wrong

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Launching With Style

Module 9

Section 9: What Can Go Wrong

By Alysan Delaney-Childs

Info Product Blueprint was created by
Kenneth A. McArthur

Alysan Delaney-Childs, Project Manager and Editor
Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

What Can Go Wrong

"Be prepared, " is the motto of the Boy Scouts, it also needs to be the motto of every product developer. Much like you keep a spare tire in the trunk of your car you need to plan for the 'what ifs' or glitches in your launch strategy.

The way to minimize these glitches is to have a plan you use throughout research, development and implementation stages. Tracking or using a checklist is critical to making sure you actually have implemented your 'what if' prevention plan.

What you will learn in this Section:

- Project and launch strategy tracking mechanisms
- Things to include on your prevention plan when implementing your product launch

Whiteboards, Notebooks and Post-Its For Tracking

My husband and friends laugh about my list making, but years of project management have proven to me lists work. In the chaos of a product launch between the adrenaline and tiredness, everyone's memory needs an assist.

Whatever method you use to track your list is great. Some people use computer programs for project management. I've included a list of resources at the end of this section. (Tip: Do not spend the time and energy to learn a new project management system in the middle of a project/product launch.)

Whiteboards are a great way to track what is needed. For those of us who need an in-your-face tracking system whiteboards can't be beat. I am forever indebted to a person on a teleseminar who talked about a low cost whiteboard he used for his list making and mindmapping. His suggestion, "Go to a home supply store and get a sheet of white paneling designed for bathrooms." The sheets come 4' by 8.' The cost is around $12 add some screws and you have a giant whiteboard. All it needs is erasable markers. I have mine mounted above my computer and use it for urgent to do's.

Some Internet marketers I know are great fans of post-it notes. They use either big poster boards or the wall to mount their tracking notes.

Notebooks are good to take notes. If you keep them small enough you can keep them with you at all times. Our design and layout editor Michelle uses separate 3-ring notebooks with colored tab dividers to track projects.

Notes

Areas You Need to Include in Your Plan

A ‘what if plan’ or contingency plan should be ready to use when needed. If you don’t have the expertise, ask. There are forums available where you can get assistance and resources. You can hire a coach or mentor, but plan for problems for they will occur.

Four broad areas seem to recur again and again in problem launch discussions: website, payment, fulfillment and support. Some of the glitches occur infrequently and others a little more often. The ones that occur when you never would have thought of that are those to flag and check and see whether you are covered in your contingency plan.

Website Issues

Domain Name

Hosting companies dislike people who spam and will stop hosting your site with sufficient complaints. Mike Filsaime found out when he launched a product, that it’s not only your hosting company that can pull your site, but your domain registrar as well.

Mike Filsaime had bought a domain name from another Internet marketer. The paperwork wasn’t immediately transferred. When a complaint of spam by an affiliate was made to the registrar, Mike’s domain was pulled. Some days later he was back online. Now not all registrars do this, but it is something to be aware of as it can really put a crunch in your promotion.

Prevention

- If you buy a domain, make sure the domain is completely transferred prior to launch. This way your contact information is readily available if a problem occurs.
- You’ve heard, “Read the fine print,” before you buy? Read the policies of your domain registrar or reseller prior to launch.
- Know the CANSPAM act regulations before you launch and make sure you comply. Ignorance is not a defense. http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/buspubs/canspam.htm
- Train your affiliates in CANSPAM regulations prior to launch.
- Dump affiliates who spam – quickly and decisively.

Notes

- Monitor email to stay aware of developing issues.

Site Crashes

You get ready for launch, the buzz is out there, and as traffic increases your site crashes. Site crashes can occur for a number of reasons. Software fails to run as expected, your database program isn't able to handle the number of visitors/buyers, the bandwidth (amount of space your site and visitors are using) exceeds what you had agreed to with your host, host servers fail, hurricanes and power outages occur. What it means to you is lost dollars, lost credibility with your partners and affiliates and lost time from you that could be better spent elsewhere.

Prevention

- Choose a hosting company with support. When you choose a hosting company you want to make sure you will have support available when you need it. The Internet is a 24/7 world and problems can and do occur at many different hours during launch implementation.
- Develop a good relationship with your hosting company. Your first contact should be well before launch day or when problems occur.
- Talk with your hosting company about anticipated traffic for your launch. If you have some big hitters for JV partners, let them know. That way they can prepare for a spike in traffic.
- Check to see if you have adequate bandwidth (bandwidth is how much information can be used at a time). Each hosting account is given a certain amount of bandwidth for the website. When you have a large amount of traffic using multiple resources that use a lot of bandwidth such as audio or video, your site may slow down dramatically or even stop or crash. This is why communication with your hosting company and sharing your concerns, media and launch plan is so important. Also know how much they will charge you to increase the bandwidth. If you are planning a large launch with lots of traffic, take your video off the site. Replace after your first day of launch. Multiple people playing the video at the same time uses huge amounts of bandwidth and can slow down or even crash your site.
- Depending on your launch size, you may need to plan for redundancy. Redundancy means the server has multiple ways of connecting with the Internet. That way if one part goes down, your site is still online and working. Redundancy is an extra expense of hosting

Notes

so you may need to juggle anticipated traffic vs. cost decisions.

- Either with your existing company or another company have a mirror site ready to go. This way you can be up and running again in a timely manner.
- Will your program database have the scalability (will it let you handle 100 or more times) your usual number of visitors and buyers?
- What security measures are in place? Getting hacked is not a fun experience.

Program Communication Issues

When implementing your product launch you want all parts of your site and linking programs to talk and work together. This is why pre-launch testing is so important.

You want your shopping cart to interact with your payment processor and vice versa. You want your shopping cart to send data to your affiliate manager program (otherwise you will have to manually sort what to pay what affiliate and partner, and hope you get it right.)

You want your registration and email connection system to work collecting and displaying the information the way you want. You want your Autoresponder system to pick up the information from your email registration so it will start sending emails to prospects and buyers.

You want links that work and are not broken.

Prevention

- Have friends and associates act as beta testers for your site. Have them go through each possible scenario on your website through test affiliate links: visitor that buys, visitor that doesn't buy, visitor who buys the one time offer (OTO), the visitor that doesn't, and a visitor needing customer support. This will give you feedback on your auto responders, your payment processing, your support system and your affiliate tracking system. Adjust your systems accordingly.
- Test your order page for orders inside and outside the United States. Many countries have custom charges, tariffs and VAT that must be included in product sales.

Conversion

Tracking your metrics is critical for your product launch. You want to track not only how many visitors come, but also how many visitors are converted into buyers. This can give you a

Notes

good idea of how well your site and your sales letter is converting. Poor conversion equals poor sales and disappointed partners and affiliates.

Prevention

- Track your metrics on an hourly basis. By tracking you can tell where your visitors left your site. This gives you a starting point to adjust your site for better conversion.
- Plan multiple offers for effectiveness. Use split testing programs to test one offer versus another.
- Adjust and redo your sales letter to increase conversion. Tracking and tweaking your site and sales letter to increase conversion boosts sales.
- John Reese noted Internet marketer says, "Keep it simple. Limit your options for choices." Place frequent calls to action and order links/buttons where appropriate. Make it easy for people to do business with you.

Payment

Having a customer easily go through the sales process and pay is a delight. Even better is when the money ends up in your account. Planning and communication are important in getting this step accomplished.

You need to have multiple ways for people to pay. Some people prefer PayPal or another processing company while others prefer to use their credit card. Whatever the choice a merchant account for processing credit cards doesn't happen overnight. Your first visit should be to your bank to see if they will handle Internet credit card payments. Many will not, but it's always worth asking.

Set up your accounts; bring in a copy of your product for them to see. Banks and credit card companies are notoriously conservative. Many are convinced the Internet is a big scary place for people laundering money and other such illegal activities (very broad generalization for dramatic purposes).

No matter what you need to make them comfortable. Talk about your launch and how much you anticipate you will bring in. Realize huge amounts of money to them coming in looks suspicious. This leads to frozen accounts and huge frustration. Accounts have been frozen over six months while the investigation occurs.

Notes

If your bank won't or can't listen to you, find another resource. Some are listed on the Info Product Blueprint customer resource page.

Prevention

- Plan one to three months in advance if you need to get a merchant account. Depending on your credit history it may take some time to set up.
- Investigate terms, fees and policies of each credit card processing company before you choose.
- Find out which credit card processing companies work with your shopping cart.
- Keep contact numbers, names and emails handy so you can talk, email or contact a representative easily.
- Talk to your credit card processor. Show them your product. Discuss the anticipated amount of sales. You may need to have your limit increased.
- Set up your Pay Pal or other processing account.
- If you have a digital product, consider using ClickBank as your processing company.
- If you are having outrageous success on launch day, call the credit card company representative and let them know. Better you call and talk before the credit card company's fraud unit shuts you down for 'excessive and unusual sales activity.'

Fulfillment

When someone buys your product there is an expectation they will receive it. Sounds trite, but not really. Depending on your product delivery system whether it's an immediately digital downloadable product or physical product, you need to have a fulfillment system that delivers your product into your customer's hands.

So many new marketers tell themselves, "I'll sleep the day after launch." The day after launch is when you need to be available to answer customer support and implementation issues.

Digital Products

Digital downloads are considered to be one of the easiest and least expensive way to deliver your products into a customer's hands. However, a customer's Internet skill level and excitement can interfere as well as several interrelated steps.

Notes

Prevention

- Beta test your site prior to launch. Have your great grandmother or someone who is not Internet savvy buy your product. Test for understanding of directions and ability to download. Don't assume anything.
- Make sure your payment processor and your download link are activated. It is very frustrating to pay for something and then not be able to get it.
- If you are using a download passcode, write the code numerous times in your email. Lost passcodes are the most frequent complaint for downloadable products.
- Set up a system for lost passcodes. Whether it is a person in a help desk system or an automatic link with a database, have a system in place.
- Decide whether passcode fraud or link fraud is a potential problem for you. Some people will share their codes with "friends." If this is a potential problem, check into passcode protection or passcode generation programs. These programs either time limit or make it only possible to download a purchase once.
- Answer emails or help tickets promptly.
- People who will rip you off. Realize it will happen. Deal and go on.

Physical Products

Shipping a physical product to a customer can be an easy or nightmare experience. If you plan to ship CD's or DVDs spend the extra money on a DVD case. Using a jewel case (plastic holders) leads to numerous returns. People perceive a cracked or broken case means a defective product. Also they very rarely return the one case, they will ship the entire product back. Point of note whether you choose to use a fulfillment house or your dining room table, your customer perception becomes your reality.

Overall

- If a shipping or transportation strike occurs let your customers know. This is a relationship and you want repeat customers so keep them informed.
- Determine the weight of your product package so you have correct shipping costs. Otherwise you will end up absorbing extra costs and taxes.

Notes

- Decide whether you are willing to ship to high fraud countries. Your credit card processor will assist with this. Once a product is shipped, with few exceptions, it's gone.

Fulfillment House

Fulfillment houses can handle orders from single copy to thousands of copies. With their experience, they can duplicate, ship and track for you. Choose your fulfillment house carefully because in your customer's eyes the fulfillment house and you are one and the same entity.

Prevention

- If you plan to use a fulfillment house ask for references.
- Check the company out thoroughly with other marketers. Ask about problems they encountered and solutions they came up with
- Don't wait till the last minute to get estimates on costs and time for turn around.
- Ask how many other jobs they have scheduled at the same time.
- Get a preview copy before you agree to a full product run. Things may not look exactly as you expected. Also check the packing when you receive your copy. Did it protect the product or not?
- Get a firm cost including taxes, customs tariffs and other expenses. Build this into your shipping cost.
- If a customer has a unique shipping address, build into your order form a place for people to get a shipping quote. Shipping to Antarctica and South Africa can cost more than your product if you are not careful.
- Do not send your only master copy to the fulfillment house. Companies do go out of business and you want to be able to continue even if your fulfillment company does not.
- Set up a plan for refunds and charge backs.
- Specify you want a signature for your delivery. Packages and deliveries wander.
- Ask how long it will take if you sell out and have to reorder. Find out their minimum order?

Notes

- Get your product copies and information to the fulfillment company in a timely manner. It is a fulfillment house not a magician.

- Get the names, phone and email contacts for the team in the fulfillment house you will be working with.

- Track sales and affiliate referral sales in addition to and independently of your fulfillment house.

- Specify who – you or the fulfillment company – is sending out customer emails. Make sure you specify you want order tracking sent out in customer emails. That's the neat program used by postal services and shipping companies so a customer can figure out where their package is at 4 am on a Tuesday. That visible checkpoint will save you a multitude of emails and help tickets from customers wanting to know when their product will reach them. Remember you did a great job of getting them excited about their purchase.

Shipping It Yourself

There are pros and cons in handling everything yourself. If you have a small launch or are doing a gradual roll-out where you only have to do one or two items, then doing it yourself might work. But make sure whatever you send out products is done in a timely manner. Its your reputation at stake.

<u>Prevention</u>

- Inform and get agreement from your partner, spouse or cat that the dining room table and other parts of your home will be slightly chaotic.

- Find an inexpensive source for boxes and packing materials. The cost adds up quickly. Pack securely to avoid damage and breakage.

- Set up a plan to duplicate or outsource duplication of printed materials, DVDs and CDs.

- Inform your customers when the product is shipped to them. You can offer the same package tracking ability depending on the shipping company you use.

- Set up a shipping account with some carriers that do shipping overseas.

- Know the expense of shipping to 'x' country so you can cover your expenses.

Notes

- Investigate shipping requirements for your country and others to conform to shipping requirements for packaging, forms and tariffs, taxes and customs.

Support

After the sale, your customers will have questions and issues that need to be addressed. This area can make or break your reputation. Answer and respond to emails or help tickets quickly. Understand your customers are excited about their purchase you don't need them having buyers' remorse and returning the product.

Problems will occur with any process, but how you handle it will make the difference to your customer.

<u>Prevention</u>

- Personalize your thank you page. It requires only a few more lines of code to personalize your message and makes a lasting impression on your customer.
- Give a printable page for your customer on how to whitelist, safelist your email address so they will receive your information. Let them know how to get hold of you for help. (It can be a help desk or emails)
- Have your Autoresponder set up and ready to go. Repeat your download or thank you page in an email. That way it is in the email box available for reference.
- Give your customer information on how to use your product. Encourage your customer to visit a forum if you have one. Help them successfully use your product. Time your messages to arrive every few days or so depending on the type of product offered.
- Give them a resource page of FAQs (frequently asked questions) or a prepopulated knowledge base so they can start to feel good about using their new product.
- If you are going to use a help desk with other people train them so there is a uniform way of handling issues.
- Include new issues in your knowledge base or FAQs.
- For physical products include shipping package tracking links in your follow up emails. This saves many emails and tickets.

Notes

- Set up a feedback mechanism. Get and solicit comments from your customers. They can help you develop the next or improved version of your product. Your customers can be your evangelists for your product if you give them the opportunity.

Notes

~~~~~~

Problems can and will occur during a product launch. Your best solution is to implement a proactive plan of prevention, then go for it. Combine your focus with plan flexibility, then you will be prepared whatever challenges arise.
~~~~~~

What Can Go Wrong Self-Assessment Questions

1. What areas do I need to cover in my prevention plan?

2. What needs to be on my "To Do" list?

Next . . . Module 10: Follow-up And Customer Support