

5 Ways to Land Your Company in the News

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Help a Reporter connects journalists with folks looking for publicity.

You're likely already marketing in social media, doing your best to connect with actual and potential customers on, say, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Traditional media such as television, magazines, and news agencies may be off your radar. However, getting featured on "Good Morning New York," in Glamour magazine, or in a Reuters' news story published online and all over the world can produce a serious bump in sales.

Getting into the media spotlight can cost nothing other than a little time, effort, and creativity. Here's how.

5 Ways to Connect with Media People

Respond to reporter queries. A service called [Help a Reporter](#) links journalists who are looking for interview subjects with people and companies looking for publicity. The basic subscription is free, with upgraded accounts at \$19 or \$49 a month providing a bit more convenience. As a subscriber, you'd receive three daily emails describing the specific sources or stories needed by reporters for news articles or feature pieces.

The key to success here is responding quickly and briefly only to those reporter queries where you have something exactly on target to offer. For instance, last December online jewelry merchant Brittany Witt got her earrings featured in a holiday gift guide for travelers by responding to a listing in Help a Reporter. In her short pitch to the reporter, she emphasized why these earrings were perfect for travelers.

Follow reporters, editors, and producers on social media. Identify reporters or other media people who focus on the kind of specialty, lifestyle, or niche products you sell and then find and follow them on Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn. Over time, you'll get a sense of their personality and interests. Sometimes they'll even mention specific stories they're looking for sources on.

"Say hello and create a relationship," advises Roshanda Pratt, a former television producer. "Engage, don't stalk. The best way to do that is by commenting on their work. Believe it or not, they are people too."

For example, if a columnist who writes about parenting mentions an app that didn't work well for her, write a reply post describing an alternative gadget that's selling big on your site. Be brief

and casual, but identify yourself as an owner or manager of an online shop, as that makes you a sort of expert in the columnist's eyes.

Spot a trend and pitch a story. When you're following the rise and fall in popularity of various items you sell, you may notice a color, or a need, or a product category that's quietly surging. You might also spot a pattern in reviews, questions, or comments posted on your site.

Media people (usually) want to learn about such trends from people like you who have their finger on the pulse of what's going on. This is especially true for trends that either seem to have social significance or are simply kooky. When they prepare their story on the trend, reports will quote you, which in turn offers visibility to readers, listeners, or viewers who had never heard of your company.

It's not hard to find contact info for media folks. Most media outlets provide a list on their websites of email addresses and phone numbers for staff.

Scrutinize editorial calendars. If you know how and where to look, you can sometimes find out which topics a magazine is planning to cover in the next six to 12 months. Editors create what's called an [editorial calendar](#), which maps out topical concentrations they are planning, issue by issue. By checking out editorial calendars, you could know to approach, say, Family Talk for its March technology issue about what's new in baby monitors.

Once you identify the timing where your company or product could fit, customize a pitch for the slot you identified.

Go local. As an ecommerce company, you sell nationwide and perhaps around the world. You might not imagine that coverage in local papers or the local news would benefit you much. However, this is usually the easiest kind of publicity to get, and any media coverage boosts your credibility when you refer to it or link to it on your company's About Us page. Also, reporters have an amazing ability to ferret out what's interesting about what you do. They might portray you in a more intriguing light than you would on your own. In turn, their write-up or broadcast could spark national coverage.

Look at your local paper and envision where a story about you might fit — such as business, lifestyle, books, arts, or sports. Then contact the reporter whose name frequently appears in that section. Local publications love to hear about a hidden gem in their community. Unbeknownst to them, the biggest website selling horse treats or gluten-free cosmetics or lacrosse gear for kids is headquartered in a back alley off Main Street! That kind of publicity is practically a sure thing.



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