

Five Steps to Building Community Buzz

Just because you've built it, they won't know to come unless you can get the word out.

This is why getting "buzz" is the brick and mortar of your community's marketing efforts.

The way to get buzz comes down to getting coverage in local papers, magazines, blogs, and social media. And how do you get their attention?

Through building strong relationships with the press.

So if you want to heighten your community's profile, solid relationships with the local press can help you generate the publicity you want—and deserve.

Here are five ways to build relationships with the local press so you can get YOUR organization noticed!

Go ahead -- boost your buzz!

1. Research Before You Reach Out

Reporters dislike story pitches that have nothing to do with the beats they cover. If you blindly email any reporter on staff, you haven't taken time to research their work respectfully or appropriately. So research before you reach out. This demonstrates your interest in their subject matter and strengthens your rapport.

Before contacting a reporter, find out what they've covered recently. Did they report about a neighboring community or a business in your town? Is your news something that fits well with their coverage area? If so, craft a unique angle and pitch away.

2. Commune with Community Bloggers

While reporters still reign, bloggers are the new tastemakers of modern media. So take time to reach out to any bloggers who've shown interest in your community.

This may take a bit of research on your part, but it won't require you to reinvent the wheel. If the blogger covered any community topics in the past, reach out to express interest in his or her work, or to provide an update on an initiative of note. Talk to them about things that are new and different. Invite them to tour the new microbrewery or to meet the new business owners revitalizing Main Street.

Not sure where to start? Ask hometown friends on Facebook what their favorite local blogs are. Where do they go online to find out interesting events going on in the city or the best new place to get a cupcake?

3. A Fact Sheet Fuels Interest

A little advance footwork on your part is great fodder for the media. Fuel their interest with a one-page “fact sheet” featuring vital community stats, a variety of story angles, and quality graphics or photos.

If a reporter isn’t interested in one topic, he might be attracted to another. If he isn’t interested in covering that new zip line park, pitch a fun angle about your community bike path. By the same token, if the reporter isn’t interested in the new distillery opening downtown, be sure to discuss the locally grown ingredients that make their whiskey the greatest.

4. Follow Reporters and Bloggers on Social Media

Following a reporter on social media maximizes your chances of starting a conversation—or contributing a point to one in progress. Following their posts on Twitter or Facebook gives you a perspective on their positions and overall popularity. Social media offers you insights on the issues that matter to them—and on the ones that don’t.

A good way to start a new relationship with a reporter is to retweet their posts, read their profile and learn more about their interests. When you take the discussion to email, find ways to show you’ve done your research by referencing a tweet, post or article they’ve written.

5. Customize your correspondence

Once you’ve researched her story angles and social media perspectives, craft a personal email to the reporter or blogger with your pitch. This personalized approach may make your story a priority. A customized email introduction, perhaps referencing the reporter’s past work or interest in the position she took, is a rarity in her inbox.

Always keep your message concise. After your introduction, write a two to three sentence summary of your community initiative or company. Wrap this up with a call to action about your relevance to the community, or to the beat she covers.

Once you put this plan into action, let us know how it worked for you. Remember -- don’t get frustrated when your first, second or tenth pitch doesn’t work... it will all be worth it when you do get a bite and your hard work pays off.

I can’t wait to hear of your successes!

Share your results with us on social media...

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