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Publicity: The art of getting attention

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Public relations is more subtle than advertising. With advertising, the audience knows the advertiser paid for space and they may be a bit skeptical about some of the claims in the ad. But, over time, a properly planned PR campaign can actually change the public's perception of your product or service, even move it to a higher level. Once your product or service has a higher perceived value, people will agree that it's worth a higher price.

Whether the business owner prepares their own publicity plan (usually not a great idea), or retains a pro (a better idea), here are important steps:

- * Identify your target audience(s) - age, gender, geography, income.
- * Determine your strategy to reach them - What hot buttons will make them act?
- * Decide which vehicles you'll use (email, postcards, print ads, radio, website, social media).
- * Set a budget - printing, postage, web, PR consultant.
- * Be consistent - Repetition works. Repetition works.

Here are some of my keys to creating an effective awareness campaign, whether your business started last month or 100 years ago:

1. Regularly create and distribute positive news about aspects of your business -Focus on different angles to make it fresh and to hit different 'hot buttons.'
2. Be cost-effective -- Reformat news to fit a website, newsletter, email, blog, brochure.
3. Emphasize added value -location, savings.
4. Cross-marketing - Joint programs with nearby businesses.
5. Special events, exhibits, programs, speakers -These are automatic publicity generators.
6. Media contacts - Send news to the right person and stay in touch.
7. Other vehicles -cable TV; interviews and tours with reporters; brochures, flyers, displays at fairs, photo opps with elected officials, etc.

It's crucial to continuously promote your brand to retain current customers and attract new ones. That's why Coke still advertises.

The more positive news emanating from your business on different fronts, the more you will be perceived as successful, and that your product or service is worth the extra cost.

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