



KnightLine

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We're on the Web!
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"the average message communicated in a news story or feature has 3 to 7 times more credibility than one presented in an advertisement. That's big bang for your buck"

Use PR: Create Awareness & Generate Leads

By: Ray Gordon Knight C.E.O.- *Chief Envisioneer Officer*

*This is the sixth in the series of articles designed to help small and medium-sized businesses improve their marketing and sales by **cost-effectively** increasing awareness, protecting their customer base and attracting new business. Prior articles are available at www.rayknight.com*

This article presents a simple, how to approach to tell your story by adding press releases distribution into your do-it-yourself marketing plans. Read on to learn why, how, what to write and distribute, how to get it in print, and what to do after the fact with the new communication tools.

Finally Some Good News!

Everyone likes to read good news-especially in challenging economies and marketplaces. Enough of the doom and gloom! Success stories and achievements interest and stimulate businesses and consumers to look favorably on companies, their personnel, products and services and civic involvement.

Small and medium-sized businesses drive job growth. They are the lifeblood of the economy yet tasked with wearing so many hats or limited resources, many companies have not hired full-time marketing staff, an advertising or public relations agency to insure they are getting the word out. Many companies are so busy acquiring new business and serving existing clients that they fail to extract the full value out of trumpeting their accomplishments to important audiences that can positively impact their business. Through the years, I've worked with various companies to review and analyze their past and current marketing plans in helping them develop and implement monthly, quarterly and yearly marketing and sales plans that use PR as a key part of their strategy.

PR Returns on Your Invested Time & Effort

Interestingly, small and medium-sized businesses regularly spend the time and money to design, produce and place advertisements in magazines and newspapers, yet they are surprised to learn that experts indicate that the **average message communicated in a news story or feature has 3 to 7 times more credibility than one presented in an advertisement**. That's big bang for your buck!

So how to get the word out time-effectively and cost-effectively? Become your own generator of positive news about your company and your achievements through a press release distribution strategy. Plan and schedule a bi-monthly or, at the least, a quarterly series of releases. Commit to it, gauge your response and learn as you go along.

A Potential Home Run.

In various industries, I've seen how a series of press releases can work wonders in keeping the market up to date on the company's progress, achievements, evolution and growth. I've used PR releases to broaden my or client's market by testing other geographic territories and by professionally translating the release into Spanish to target both U.S. Hispanic markets and Latin American markets. This effort broadened our sources of business, created positive awareness and generated an inexpensive source of potential

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new business with other businesses and consumers that may have not come about save for the released news.

Here are a few questions and answers to guide you through the process.

Q: Why Should I Use Public Relations as a Part of My Marketing Plans?

A: Public Relations can have multiple benefits in raising your business profile, building your image supporting your marketing and sales efforts, and generating new business and opportunities. All with little time and money invested—that’s *smart marketing and good business practice!*

- PR is a tool that can help generate exposure and awareness about your business.
- PR plays an important role in educating clients, contacts and prospects on the value you render.
- PR can help demonstrate the momentum and success of your business. People like to work with companies that are movers/shakers and winners.
- PR adds an extra degree of professionalism to help build your image.
- PR fosters credibility and can help you stand out from the competition.
- PR can help open doors to potential business. It can generate inquiries/leads and potential partners/contacts/alliances.
- PR gives credit where credit is due.
- PR can be targeted to particular audiences. Messages can be customized time-effectively.
- PR can be repurposed into other parts of your marketing and sales activities and corporate information in both online and offline formats.
- PR can driving traffic to website and provide additional content for the website.

Q: What Type of News Should I Share?

A: It will vary by the sources you send the releases to but here are several topical areas to consider focusing on in your PR releases.

- New Business Developments- products/services/solutions
- New markets served-geographic/ vertical industry
- New business partner/alliance
- Noteworthy results for your client/customer
- Manpower-New Team member
- Milestones/Accolades/Achievements
- Surveys
- Events
- Community/cause participation

Q: What Are Some Structural Guidelines?

A: Here are some simple pointers to get you started.

- Use the title of the release to tell the story
- Use the opening paragraph to orient the reader the key messages of the release
- Use the first line of each paragraph to tell the key idea of that section
- Order the information from most important to least important
- Prior to distribution, ask yourself—“So what?” Strive to develop content that attracts the reader’s attention, renders value, presents an insight, and forecasts a trend.
- Add all your contact details including office location, phones, fax, website and a short description about your business and what you do for who and why.

Q: How Do I Distribute The Release And To What Audiences?

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"What impression do you get when you visit a company's website or review their materials to find that there is either no news or old news? My first impression- either they have no news to tell---or they are too busy to tell their story. In either case they are missing out on this ingredient in their do-it-yourself marketing arsenal.

- A: Here are several ways to distribute your press releases.
- Send it to the local business press.
 - Your trade association and membership organizations.
 - Your client list, your prospect list and vendor lists.
 - Check out www.Bizwire.com for online distribution. In Florida contact Laura at 1-800-770-Wire (9473). An inexpensive yearly (\$120) membership fee entitles you to select geographic and industry distribution options with or without a picture to your targeted audiences. Tracking systems also offered can tell you about which papers or editors are reviewing your news. Another source is www.prnewswire.com.
 - Start now collecting email addresses to developing traditional and online distribution lists.
 - Post it on your website.

Q: How Can I Extend The Value Of The Press Release?

- A: Here are several ways to get all you can out of your PR releases.
- Reprints online and offline. Reproduce the release with permission and/or assistance of the publisher and add it as a point of sale take-one, a shopping bag stuffer or an insert into your billing statements.
 - Repurpose the content into a print or online newsletter
 - Turn it into a poster and show it prominently in your store or event show booth.

First impressions count! What impression do you get when you visit a company's website or review their materials to find that there is either no news or old news? My first impression--either they have no news to tell---or they are too busy to tell their story. In either case they are missing out on this ingredient in their do-it-yourself marketing arsenal.

Make your business stand out from the crowd by adding PR as part of your marketing plans. *And add me to your distribution list to read your hard-earned bragging rights!*

KnightLine is a publication of *KnightWorks*. Ray Gordon Knight, author is the C.E.O., *Chief Envisioneer Officer of KnightWorks*. Our entire focus is on *Passionately, Building Your Business and Brands*. We work with business owners and executives to implement practical, **no-cost and low cost proven business building and business improvement techniques and strategies**. We've developed our systems and processes over a 25 year domestic and international career as both a corporate senior executive and entrepreneur active in various industries. Much of the content included in ***KnightLine*** incorporates strategies and tactics we have personally applied to growing our clients' and our own businesses.

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