


Press Pass

How To Become A REsource For Local Media

Community Newspapers Offer Opportunity To Boost Visibility

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Even in a down market, there are opportunities for your clients. The same holds true for you and your business in this "down media market." How? By understanding how your local media works and by becoming a "REsource."

The growth of the Internet and specialty cable channels over the past 10 years has forever changed the way people get their news. As a result, network news is losing viewers, and large-city daily newspapers are losing advertisers (and in some cases going out of business). However, community weekly newspapers continue to survive.

According to the Poynter Institute, weeklies are surviving because they are:

- Less dependent on classified advertising.
- Subject to less intense competition from free services.
- Less dependent on national advertising, since local merchants still prefer local weeklies.
- An "essential buy for local businesses," with higher rates of circulation penetration.
- Balanced in terms of amount of content and frequency of publication.

In addition, the online audience so far represents only a modest share of weekly newspapers' business. Another major reason weeklies are surviving is that they are very lean. Often, there may be only one full-time reporter and an editor (who could be overseeing more than one paper). As a result, these reporters are under more pressure to produce more content with less support.

In addition to stand-alone weeklies and small newspaper groups, there are three main players in local media in Massachusetts. GateHouse Media publishes 158 community newspapers/local Internet sites, mainly in the eastern part of the state. In addition, Boston.com (the online site of the Boston Globe) produces 50 town-specific pages, and Patch (part of AOL) currently produces 76 town-specific sites that all provide "hyper-local" news (larger news outlets that include coverage of local towns).

Before you can be a resource to the local media, start by building a relationship with your target media outlet(s) by following this two-step plan:

Step 1 – Do Your Homework

- Read the local paper/news site that your customers read a lot.
- Understand the structure/setup of the newspaper or news site.
- Identify who is writing what and focus on those articles that are most relevant to your customers.

Step 2 – Engage The Reporter

- Once you've become very familiar with your local news outlet and its structure, engage the reporter:
- Read his/her articles and note how they format their stories.
- Email the reporter about one of his/her articles and offer assistance and expertise.
- Make a reporter's job easier (For example, suggest trends that you are seeing in the market).

To become a useful resource to the media, follow the steps above, but then take it a step further. Invest a substantial amount of time in developing the relationship.

Make sure what you are providing the reporter is interesting and valuable information to the readership. Finally, remember that while the goal of becoming a "REsource" is about you, don't make it about "you."

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