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## FREE PRESS, AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE



In my introduction to '*Recession Proof Marketing*' I identified several ways you could maximize your marketing effectiveness while minimizing our cost. In this article I will address what I consider one of the most cost effective forms of marketing - Free Press. Like most things in life, Free Press isn't really free, because you have to pay to create it, but it's as close to free marketing as you can get, and it can produce strong results. In this category I include

Press releases

User profiles, success stories, and other articles

Product reviews

These materials can be created in-house, or by hiring an experienced professional writer, and sent out to dozens of hard-copy and online publications. Why, you may ask, would a magazine publish your material? Because, magazines are in business to furnish information to their customer base, and if your information is relevant to their customers, and well written, they want to print it. Magazines typically average about 50% editorial and 50% advertising. That means a magazine with 50 pages will have to fill 25 of those with editorial. They don't want to write everything, so they use what you write. Trust me, if you produce *good* copy, they will print it (emphasis on the word *good*). Online magazines might be slightly different in that they may have more editorial, which only means that they need more material from you.

So, what is *good* copy? It varies, depending on what your writing, but here are some basic guidelines.

Writing in general - Your writing must use good



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grammar. You're typically writing for educated professionals who read to gain insight or information, and they care about what they read.

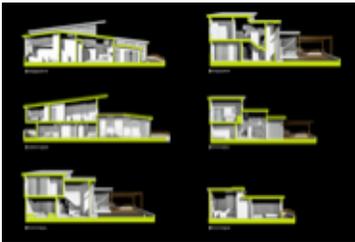
Bizcom.com sites several statistics that emphasize the importance of writing, including: "An incredible \$225 billion is lost by business each year because of poor reading, writing, and math skills." If you want to have your work published, use a professional writer and be sure you have someone proofread and edit everything for grammar and punctuation before it is sent out.

Press Releases - are intended to inform your market about significant events related to your company or products. The subject doesn't have to be earth shaking, but it does have to be important to you and your customers. It can be as simple as adding new employees or moving offices, to as complex as a new product release. The key is to make sure it is really news. Adding a new feature to an existing product can be considered news. Bringing on a new client can also be considered news, if the client is well known in your industry. But, reorganizing your office, or making a sale to a small unknown customer is probably not news. Another important element of press releases is how they are written. They are not stories, they are facts. Stick to the subject and keep it short. Usually they are 2 or 3 pages at most, including company history, contact information, and one or two photographs. They are not advertising, do not try to sell your company or product in a press release. Finally, include images related to the subject. Magazines like photographs. And, proofread everything before it is sent out.

So where do you send them? Identify your industry and build a "press release" database. Start with the hard copy and online publications that cater to your potential clients; include your local newspapers and business journals; make sure you include business associations and groups that address your market; finally, if you work regionally or nationally, include the major business publications like News Week and the Wall Street Journal. Sound silly? Trust me, you never know when a single statement will catch the attention of an editor and catapult you onto the national scene. The important thing is to send your press release to all of them. Let them decide if they want to publish your news. Send your press

Free Press - A Bargain You Can't Afford To Miss, by Nickolai Vasilieff, copyright © 2011. All rights reserved. No reproduction or publication is authorized without written permission by the author. Download is for personal use only. releases out by email. Include pictures whenever possible, and always provide a press contact, in case they have questions.

User Profiles or Success Stories - Throughout my career I have worked with companies to create user stories. I do this by interviewing a company who has used your products, then writing an interesting article about their project. It is important to note that this is a non-fiction story about the client, and how they used technology or some innovation to



their benefit. It is reporting with a flair. Unlike a press release this type of writing is considered creative non-fiction and must tell a story. It is not an advertisement for your product, so you must skillfully weave product information into your story. Many companies produce articles that simply focus on how a client used their product, and have found that magazines are not interested. The reason is that magazines want to publish articles that enlighten their customer base to new and innovative ways to do business, and they want articles that tell a story.

A successful article will focus on a specific project, and include not just the products of your company, but all the products and processes that were used on the project. The article will also highlight the benefits to the user, and how those benefits translate to the industry in general. In addition to being published in industry magazines, articles can be used in company brochures, newsletters, on your company's website, and as handouts or mailers.

If written well, articles are one of the best marketing tools because they carry the weight of a customer recommendation. But be careful. If they are not written well, they will never get published, and if a poorly written article is published, it will do more damage to your business than good.

I should also note that although many magazines will publish company generated articles, some magazines will not. If you have a specific publication you want to publish an article, contact the editor and ask if you can submit an article for publication. If yes, than generate your article. If no, ask if they would be interested in writing a story about your

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client. As with all submission materials, always include pictures.

How do you get an article published? As I mentioned, if you have a specific magazine in mind, contact the editor before you send the article. If you have many publications to choose from, have the article written and submit it with a letter of request for publication. Follow up in a week or so to see if what you submitted was accepted, or if modifications are required. The main point is to be pro-active. Sometimes, standing out in a crowd just requires raising your hand. If you don't ask, you won't ever get published.

Product Reviews - are often created by magazines from interest generated by press releases. But, in some cases, a company generated product review will prompt a publication to either print your review, or conduct their own review, using your material as a foundation. As with



any article, it must be well written, and be proofed thoroughly. Like a press release, a product review must stick to the facts, and not be an ad for your product. They should be as objective as possible and must include both positives and negatives. Obviously you don't want to bash your own product, but if there are features missing or glitches in performance, they must be noted. It is perfectly permissible to include comments about how and when they might be added or fixed. Finally, if this is a new release of an existing product, include a comparison chart highlighting the new features and their benefits. If it is a new product with significant competition, you might use a comparison chart to highlight the product's features. Oh, did I mention pictures? Include them with the article.

Frankly, it's easy to stay in business during the good times. It takes something more than luck or good fortune to be successful during a recession, and we are certainly in a recession. So keep marketing. Use the tips I've included in this article, focus on free-press, and keep yourself in the market. The recession won't last forever, and if you maintain your marketing efforts you will fare better than your competitors during the recession. When the economy picks up, you will be the first company your customers and future customers contact when they need your type of

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